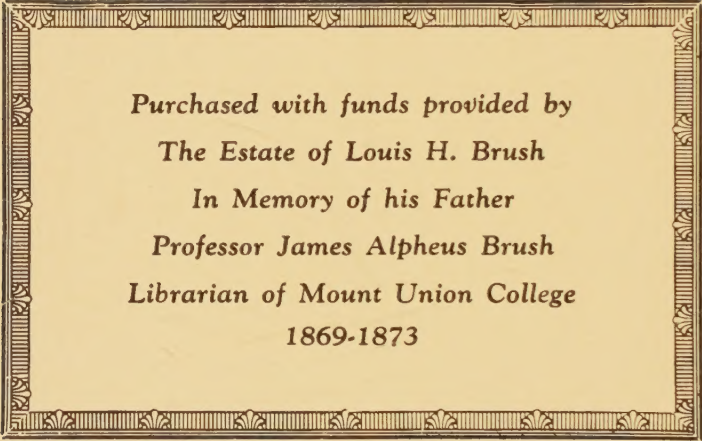


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CONFLICT AND DISSENT
IN THE HIGH SCHOOL

CONFLICT AND DISSENT IN THE HIGH SCHOOLS

by

KENNETH L. FISH

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To my wife, Joyce, who has
encouraged and helped me in every difficult thing
that I have undertaken.

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INTRODUCTION

“The overall evidence is that youth behave better than they ever did. Careful research has shown that they read better, spell better, and cipher better than they ever did. Not only that, but school discipline and behavior are better than ever before. *It is now unheard of for a school to be closed because the students are out of control.*” Earl Kelley wrote this in 1962 in his book, *In Defense of Youth*.¹

The events of subsequent years have directly contradicted the italicized observation. In one four month period shortly before this introduction was written, 349 high schools had suffered disorders. With regularity newspapers have presented accounts of schools being closed owing to trouble of one kind or another.

High school walkouts, sit-ins, and school closings are a serious concern to parents, citizens, and many students. They interfere with the regular course of learning, they complicate the already critical job of staffing schools with good teachers, and they are one more symptom of the disintegrative processes which threaten American society.

Practically everyone in a community has a stake in the quality of its high school. First and foremost, the students have. The quality of their high school experience determines their success in obtaining employment or college placement and in succeeding in these activities after graduation. Taxpayers and other residents in the community demand full value for their residential property taxes which are used primarily to finance education. The business community has a stake in the quality of schools because their quality or lack of it determines the desirability of the community as a place to live and work. Many prospective homeowners or plant locators scout a community asking first of all, "What about its schools?" The professional educator has a stake in harmonious school operations because these are necessary conditions for his effective teaching, guidance, or administration. The satisfaction of doing an effective job is the chief reward of the educator.

"If the student hasn't learned, the teacher hasn't taught" goes the old cliché, and the student does not learn very much when the school is dominated by a chanting mass of students in the auditorium, rumors about a secret meeting of a group of student vigilantes, or the presence of armed policemen in the corridors.

My experience as principal of a 2300 student high school which was partially closed down for two days as a result of a week of protests, fighting, and cafeteria disorder has given me an understanding of some of the phenomena and forces of high school conflict. Moreover, during six months of 1969, I had the opportunity and privilege of conducting a nation-wide study of student unrest. I traveled throughout the United States and visited high schools which had proven to be "hot spots." During these school visits I conducted intensive interviews with students of many different viewpoints: leftist, "establishment," militant black, militant white, and others. I talked with principals, teachers, custodians, and

candy store proprietors. The interviews dealt with the dynamics of high school conflict: past events, school organization, quality of teaching, the role of the principal, and attitudes toward conflict, student government, and race relations. The interviews were tape-recorded; many excerpts will be reproduced in this book to present the strength of people's convictions and the visceral quality of the emotions with which many of these convictions are held.

I believe that each of the individuals and groups which has a stake in high schools also has a responsibility for them. This book will also be helpful in clarifying these responsibilities. Parents and other citizens may come to recognize that high school protest and conflict is not a simple contest between good and evil but a complex social phenomenon which requires new skills of the professionals charged with running the schools, and all the moral and economic support that the citizenry can muster. The professional educator who reads this book will gain a better understanding of today's adolescents. He will have an opportunity to learn from the variety of specific accounts of conflicts in various schools, and he can benefit from theoretical information and from practical suggestions presented concerning communications and conflict resolution techniques. High school students may come to recognize that they do, indeed, have power and that it can be deeply satisfying to use this power in a responsible and constructive way.

Kenneth L. Fish
Flint, Michigan
September, 1969

CONFLICT AND DISSENT IN THE HIGH SCHOOL

Chapter 1

STUDENTS AND ISSUES

Students are no longer sitting quietly in straight classroom rows. They are rising, speaking out, and moving to the other side of the desk. The social revolution has reached the high schools.

What are the students saying? What is it all about? In the following pages participants in the high school rebellion speak for themselves.

School protests range from peaceful one-day demonstrations such as the boycott by 40 junior high school girls in Flint, Michigan in November, 1969, who sought the right to wear slacks in school, to wild rampages by hundreds of students in inner city high schools. A Cleveland, Ohio school administrator recounts that in one of the Cleveland high schools the students "literally

threw six clerks out of their chairs and took over the office of the school. They invaded the superintendent's office, sprayed Coca Cola in his face, and blew smoke at him while he awaited help from the police. At one point students in this school formed an unnatural coalition in one of the neighborhoods between the Italians and the Appalachian whites, demanding the removal of the 'niggers.'"

To counter or prevent such outrageous behavior as this, police are sometimes called. Some schools have police—or police-like employees—on the scene continually. Student reactions to this vary according to the specific situation. In one California school a student commented: "The security guards aren't any help. All they do is stand around the corridors and watch our girls every day. I think that's a waste of money. They don't even ask you for your passes. Everybody's cutting classes, white and black. I think they should have more discipline."

More violent situations arouse stronger actions and reactions. Near Chicago, a boy recounts: "There was a lot of fighting and it didn't make it any better when they brought in all the suburban policemen and the Cook County Sheriff's men. We were really at a disadvantage, because anytime a fight broke out they would always grab a Negro guy and hit him with their stick. Anytime more than about five or six Negro guys walked together the police would spray them with mace. . . . That is what really made the black students mad. After that, every opportunity we had, we tried to just tear this place down."

The interview with the principal in this school elicited some interesting remarks: "During most of October it was just a pretty tense situation here in school, with police on duty. Now and then a fight would break out. We expelled quite a number of them. But with the aid of policemen we kept the school going pretty well. But we never did seem to get rid of the tension."

The specific provocations of protest in schools throughout the country include some recurrent themes which are so frequent as to be almost predictable. The "no black cheerleader" complaint is a classic. Another is the denial of the request to have an exclusive, all-black organization for black students. Overly-restrictive dress

codes is another, as is suppression of the underground newspaper. Inadequate emphasis upon black history and black culture is a common complaint.

An increasingly frequent cause célèbre is the dismissal of a popular, student-centered teacher. The principal's version of the matter generally states that the relatively new teacher did not follow the prescribed curriculum, was often unprepared, and was generally careless about administrative requirements. The students see it differently. In an actual case in a California school a student reported: "Our history teacher is probably the best one in this school. This is his third year; right after your third year you normally get tenure. He has been informed that his contract is being stopped and he can't come back next year. They haven't given any explanation, no reasons at all why they fired him. It is thought that it is because he didn't do little things like take roll."

Not all high school trouble originates at school; some infiltrates from outside. A student in a school near a famous California university tells about this: "It seems as though all the trouble came from those hate leaflets, SPONGE (Society for the Prevention of Niggers Getting Everything). At first everyone supposed that this was something our students started. The administration later found out that some people from a junior college south of us were responsible for the whole SPONGE deal. I think they were just showing a reaction of hatred toward black people. But one thing is for sure; that SPONGE incident aggravated the tension between blacks and whites in this school."

Another catalyst for conflict in high schools is the resentment of black students against some aspects of their school experience. Black students encounter many problems in schools. Most of these are not new, but they arouse discontent which leads to action more than in the past, for this is the era of the action-ethic. The young, be they black or white, are not disposed to attitudes of acquiescence or resignation. Black students are troubled by racial slurs by white classmates or teachers, and by guidance or discipline which they deem discriminatory. They resent the absence of black heroes in their history courses and the lack of credible black characters in the literature assigned in English courses.

A black girl in a New Jersey high school, voicing her complaint about a teacher whom she regards as hostile and deprecating, says: "I can give you an example of what we have to put up with—my math teacher. He acts toward us like we're animals, or something. You can't open your mouth from the time one bell rings to the next. One day the kids just decided they were going to talk anyway and everybody was talking when he came in. He said, 'Keep quiet!' but nobody got quiet. We were sick of him. So he sat down at his desk and said, 'I don't care if you don't learn, anyway, because I'm still going to get paid.' What kind of a teacher is that?" Many black students also complain that faculty members are insensitive to their most pressing social and personal concerns. One student leader said: "I was the head of a group of black students that came in to talk with the administration to try to have them give us a little student power. They refused; they *just didn't want to listen*. We would like a Black Student Union, but the administration just can't dig it, and there's no use trying."

For many black students there is a double obstacle in relating to teachers. While other adolescents regard their teachers as symbols of authority whom they resent because of the general adolescent dislike of authority, for black students this resentment is compounded because the teacher is a person of the suspect white race. Speaking about the faculty in his school, a black student in California said: "No, there are none of them you can really trust; well, hardly any—maybe two or three teachers. There are some who will do anything to get you into trouble."

The demand for black history has swept scores of high schools. Some school systems have granted it by offering new courses; some have completely denied it; some have conceded minor, token revisions of history courses. Two black students comment on the situation in their school:

"And us black students didn't get one demand, not one!"

"Yeah, we did—we got *one*—black history."

"We got *colored folks'* history; who wants to hear about the man [George Washington Carver] and the peanuts!"

The girl quoted above seeks experiences in her school curriculum which recognize and legitimize her own strivings for a sense of

racial pride. On her blouse a three-inch button declares "Black is Beautiful." She could hold this as an inner conviction with more confidence if her world history course recognized that the ancient Egyptian beauty, Queen Nefertiti, was black. That black is not only beautiful but brave and influential should be properly proclaimed by history books acknowledging that Pedro Alonzo Nino, who piloted one of Columbus' ships, was a black man. Nor is this just a matter of pride and self-image; it is a matter of accuracy and moral right. Alerted to the racial bias of the curriculum by articulate black spokesmen, more and more black students insist that textbooks in all subjects, from kindergarten to college, show that the Negro has always had an important part in shaping the United States, that he has been and is a real person whose experience has been many sided. He inhabits the middle class and the economic upper class, not just the slums; he has been poet and physicist, not just slave; he has been courageous and assertive, not just subservient.

Most whites and many blacks past the magic age of thirty make the mistake of discounting as unimportant the complaints and grumblings of vocal black students, saying: "There's just a handful of bad ones here . . . got a chip on their shoulder . . . *most* of them appreciate how well off they are in this school." This is a delusion. I learned that the morning of the black students' boycott in the school amphitheater in Montclair, New Jersey (to be described in the next chapter). As I went about the gathering crowd telling students to go back to class, it was not just one particular category of black students who remained in defiance of my order. All remained, including a respected girl in advance placement classes, leaders of clubs, and other prominent students whom no one considered "alienated." When the showdown came these students saw the likelihood that black people were, again, being oppressed by the white-dominated establishment and they rallied together in their strong bond of racial unity. This is a fact which should be recognized. In schools where the protests are not racially based, however, but take the form of white student reformers calling for an end to adult regimentation of youth, no such *white* unity can be taken for granted.

But what about the white protesters? They exist in high schools as in colleges, though in lesser proportions. What form does their protest take?

These dissenting students aim to identify basic problems and to effect radical changes. A California student complains: "High school is used to put people in various slots. It puts black people or poor people into slots—they will be the working class. People like us guys here will go to college and flounder around in the arts. We are not supposed to have any consciousness of what is going on in working kids' minds. . . . It's almost like *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley where the Alphas were programmed to like being Alphas and the Betas to like being Betas. Kids are coming to realize one another's needs and to want to break out of this classification system. School has to deal more with adult things. On TV the average kid is exposed to war, the race problem, Biafra; and when they come in here on the day that Martin Luther King was killed and the teacher is up there lecturing away on math, ignoring everything that's happening in the world, the kids get very turned off about it and they get very violent!"

A radical student leader in a school near Chicago said: "If we had a real school takeover here, we would get rid of the principal, tie up the main office and take over the computer room. If we didn't get our demands we probably would blow up the computer. That would really hurt the school. S.D.S.* would probably send in six guys—half white and half black."

By themselves these radical students have little effect, for they are few. High school principals refer to them as "a handful of left-wing intellectual students who are causing most of the trouble." The girl who had been leader of the left-wing group at Berkeley High School in California admitted that her group numbered only about fifteen. But there is more to it than numbers.

The rhetoric of left-wing students enrages conservatives in and

*S.D.S. is Students for a Democratic Society, a national organization of student radicals which has recently received much publicity for its part in militant college and high school demonstrations.

out of school. This antagonism sometimes takes the form of physical violence. The radicals speak uneasily about their opposition: "the 'gook' killers, the real hicks who have hot cars and all that stuff. They'll never go to college; they'll never be anything but mechanics. They've been told they're dumb so often that they believe it. And then there is the clean-cut guy who runs for student body president and is going to get a letter of recommendation and probably a scholarship; he's our real enemy."

There are two possible ways that left-wing students' protests may disrupt a school, depending upon the social values of the students in that school. As the above quote implies, there is a great deal of latent antagonism between the "gook" killers or "greasers" in some high schools and the left-wingers, hippies, or intellectuals. Sometimes these car or motor-cycle oriented students who are bored with the humdrum life of school see an opportunity for some action and a chance to "put down" by physical aggression the other, more articulate youth whose social values they neither understand nor like. Such is the case in the account of violence in a white suburban high school presented in Chapter 2.

In other high schools with a large proportion of sophisticated students, left-wing leaders are more likely to arouse a substantial following and to stimulate a students-administration conflict. In such schools the role of the radical students (perhaps all white) is to call to action hundreds of the not-so-radical, not necessarily to the extreme actions which the intellectual leftists advocate, but to action that centers in more commonly held goals and complaints.

The attainment of self-determination and fuller participation in schools is one such goal. "It has become quite obvious that our schools don't really belong to us," states one seventeen-year-old boy who had become so disenchanted with his high school that he dropped out. He goes on to say: "The control of our schools is in the hands of the Establishment—people who are trying to tell us how to dress and how to think. People are going to have to be taught about democracy. They tell you there's democracy in the school; they tell you there is equality. But they never tell you who that democracy is for or who that equality is for."

It will come as no surprise to most parents of teen-agers that youths try to assert their own individuality and their own standards in many controversies. But today this takes a form of fierce insistence. Many of today's well-read and articulate youth cite society's failure to solve the problems of poverty and justice for the poor along with the doubtful ethics of America's role in Vietnam as evidence that the adult values which dominate institutions in this country are crass, materialistic, and selfish. They therefore contend that they should be allowed to shape their own school programs, to think for themselves, and thereby to reform schools to be inherently more satisfactory and to serve as the beginning of a new and better American society. School is the only institution which students believe offers them even the *possibility* of a participatory role.

These students are impatient with curricula which they consider meaningless. The causes of their dissatisfaction have been vividly documented in the film, *High School*, produced in a large, white middle class school in Philadelphia.¹ The film shows students listening to routine announcements in homeroom and sitting through a dull drill in French class. In another class the camera revealed the bored response of a mascara-eyed seventeen-year-old to her teacher's reading of "Casey at the Bat." Even the school fashion show was dominated by the standards of its middle-aged sponsor. The film has no commentary except the dialogue of teachers and students. It needed none; it was true—and unpalatable.

Most students cherish humanistic values, in sharp contrast to the regimentation and institution-centered practices in schools. Listening to them, one has the feeling that the more verbal spokesmen have just returned from a workshop in sensitivity training, and that they are passionately seeking the fulfillment of a dream in which teachers have shaken off their customary institutional robot role. Speaking of his teachers, a student says: "I want to communicate with him as *a person*; I want to break down that student-teacher role hang-up . . . they're all hung up on their role; they're afraid to communicate with us *as people*; they're afraid that something about their authority or respect is going to be lost. We're

looking for understanding; this is what is missing. There's a need for students and faculty to be *open* with each other."

America's current high school revolution involves both black and white students. In some places it is rooted in racism; in others it is caused by the crushing institutional inertia of the educational establishment colliding with the action-ethic of today's youth.

The patterns of high school protest are indicated by Alan F. Westin, professor of public law at Columbia University, who has tabulated recent cases of high school disruption. During a four-month period in 1969, protests about racial discrimination led the list with incidents in 132 schools. Following this, in order, the protest topics were: political (including Vietnam), 81; against dress regulations, 71; against disciplinary practices, 60; for educational reforms, 17.²

Tabulating the issues is one thing; interpreting them requires thoughtful consideration of the contemporary social scene and a close look at high school students.

The quest for student power takes its inspiration from many sources. The labor movement, and particularly the recent wave of militant teachers' strikes, has exerted a strong influence on the tactics of student power advocates. But perhaps students have learned their most vivid lessons in the great American game of power by observing the unfolding of the black revolution in the United States. I believe this revolution is long overdue. It is a positive phenomenon. It is also a vivid chapter of our national history which has been enacted before the eyes of the current generation of students. They have seen and heard the speeches of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., H. Rap Brown, and Stokely Carmichael. They have witnessed the Poor Peoples' March. They have seen the revolts within the black ghettos on television or at first hand. And they have learned that when people have a cause and can unite to work for that cause *they can effect change*.

Today's black students are different from their counterparts of twenty years ago, owing to social changes of many kinds. They have a new race-consciousness and feeling of unity. These qualities, coupled with an action-ethic, have made them a force to be recognized in schools. Thomas Pettigrew, a sociologist at Harvard

University states: "The most significant fact about this 'newest new Negro' is that he is relatively released from the principle social controls recognized by his parents and grandparents, from the restraints of an extended kinship system, a conservative religion, and an acceptance of the inevitability of white supremacy."³ Black students themselves are aware of this difference. Here is how one seventeen-year-old put it: "I think it is the same everywhere. You have your older black people; they usually keep quiet, and what happens in school they don't investigate often, so you have the young people trying to carry the ball with the community and the school. We had a conflict once with the school board. One member was pretty hard on the black students there—we were called 'misfits' and several other names. The parents didn't say anything about it; they didn't go to the school board. It was just the same old thing that has happened through the years."

Today's young black people are becoming confident and proud. They distinguish sharply between their "brothers and sisters" who have these attitudes and those who do not. One student makes the point in these terms: "Some are black and some are Negroes—they are nothin' but Oreos. An Oreo is a cookie; it's got black covering and it's got white cream inside. A lot of students have black skin but they're white inside because of their indoctrination. They're like Oreo cookies." Asked about herself, this student replied, "Me? I'm black through and through; you can call me a chocolate chip!"

As a distinct group in a school black students spend a good deal of time socializing together in the lunchroom. Sometimes they come together at a meeting of the Black Student Alliance or something similar. A natural consequence of getting together and discussing matters is identifying complaints—especially when there is an underlying, rankling feeling of social injustice.

Complaints of black students are similar from school to school. They feel left out of many school affairs. Seldom is the homecoming queen or prom princess a black girl. Black students have scant representation in student government. Often they are the ones who must travel farthest to school by bus, and this causes problems with afterschool activities.

All these complaints are compounded, reports one guidance counselor—the single black faculty member in a recently integrated school—by a “resentment which the black student brings to school against being removed from the school in his own neighborhood to which he has loyalties and devotion. It always comes out—‘I like *my* school and I’d like to go back!’ These students come here with a chip on their shoulder so any little thing will aggravate their hostility, because they are looking for evidence of not being accepted.”

Where racial sensitivities are acute, trouble in school can grow to serious proportions. It may originate in events which are extremely offensive and provocative to black students, though the white students and faculty, through a lack of empathy or insight, see them as “little things” or “innocent mistakes.”

One such “little incident” that escalated was reported by the president of the club for black students in a distinguished Illinois high school.

The thing started here about this mural which had been painted on a window—a mural of a black man and woman. It had been up there in the student lounge for over six weeks. It was a beautiful picture, very well done, painted by a girl who is studying art. We have this Senior Lounge Committee and there are seven white and six black on it. We usually meet on Fridays, but a meeting was called by one of the white students for Tuesday. None of the black students was informed about the meeting. One black girl happened to stumble on the meeting and she stayed. They decided it was time to wash down the mural on the window, and they voted. She voted against it, but the majority vote called for washing it down, and so two girls who weren’t even on the committee came in that day and started to wash down the window.

Well, the black kids knew that the picture had to come down sometime, but it was the way it was done! There were several comments and derogatory statements and clapping of hands by white kids, and talk about, “Oh, we’re glad *that’s* coming down.” It got annoying and the black kids got upset

about it and so there was a confrontation. Soon the assistant principal, Mr. Rice, came in. He went over to a group of white students and asked what the problem was, and they told him. When he came to the black students, they wanted to tell him their side, but he said: "I'll see you some other time and we'll discuss this. You'll have to get out of this lounge now; we're closing it down." The white kids left and the black kids stayed. He said: "If you don't get out immediately, you'll be suspended." We just sat down, and so we were suspended. And that's how the trouble started.

That is an example of the circumstances at the root of racial strife. But there is more. There is some genuine interracial antagonism between white and black students. Extensive interviews conducted in 1969 as part of the evaluation of a national television program on race relations established the existence of widespread fear and ignorance among students of each race about members of the other racial group.⁴

High school students participating in the University of Michigan's Conflict Intervention Program were asked: "How often do students of different races fight, going to and from school?" In the school with the *best* "non-fight" score, 72 percent of the students replied "sometimes," and 6 percent said "often."⁵

The emotions at the source of these figures are revealed when a black youth in an Illinois high school says: "We've gone through a living hell every day in this school. You know, the smart little comments. Like on Martin Luther King's birthday, when they had his speeches going through the intercom. Us black kids were sittin' there with the white kids saying: 'What these black kids think they're doing, trying to *run* this school?' You get furious listening to that, or hearing someone giggling. You couldn't possibly know!"

In another midwestern high school the opposite side of the contention comes out in the words of a white boy: "If the blacks had kept up they would have had this whole school wrapped around their little finger; well, they just about do, now. A lot of whites think that blacks have taken over and are running the school. There was an article in the school paper some weeks ago by a

white student who thought that black was being pushed too far here. He felt that all of a sudden there was this Afro-American Club, black exhibits, shelves of black books in the library, etc. Everything was being pushed just too fast, he wrote. The week after this appeared in the paper it was pretty tense around here."

White students have many fears and objections related to increases in the number of their black classmates. One girl reports: "I'm a cheerleader. When we go to games, these black kids are in the back of the bus drinking and smoking—and not ordinary cigarettes, either! You could smell it, and the teachers were on the bus, but they wouldn't stop them. I guess the teachers are scared to do anything. There are ten of us cheerleaders, four colored, and they're always saying, 'We want more soul on the cheer team next year.' I hate to go to games anymore. It's really depressing. And you can't say anything, that's the point. Those black kids are all so tight; they're all "brother" and "sister."

In another high school where a Black Student Union was forming, a white girl said: "Many of my friends are scared—just scared. I think anybody would be; that's a normal reaction. If you don't give the black students what they want there are a lot of things they could do. If it were a bunch of white students, I might be scared of them, too, if I were black. It's not that I'm afraid of getting hurt physically; I'm not afraid of some big black guy coming up to me with a knife and getting me. I'm just scared about what's going to happen next. When are people going to begin treating other people like people? Where is it all going to end?"

Black students have their own version of the changes that accompany their growing numbers in a school. "We've grown from 13 to 70 percent here in just a short time, according to a report a teacher told me about," says a black senior boy. "And the report also showed that as we blacks moved up, became more, activities decreased. We don't have hardly any clubs. No assemblies any more. To take a trip—like go to Washington the way they used to—just don't happen; that would be a miracle."

Racism, be it white or black, does not grow spontaneously within young people. Its roots are within the community. Racism often

reflects parental values, and herein lies part of the problem. Darlene, a New Jersey eleventh-grader, tells of her father persistently asked after a day of trouble in her school: "Did they touch you, Darlene? Did one of those black ——— touch you? If they laid their hands on you I'd go into that school with a machine gun and kill the bastards!" Despite his daughter's insistence that nothing had happened to her, he persisted in conjuring up visions of black youths molesting his daughter. This sort of parental attitude has its counterpart in some black families.

Conflict and dissent in high schools is a complex subject with many sociological and psychological ramifications. The actors on the stage are, of course, school authorities, parents, other citizens. But first and foremost they are students.

The restiveness of the students quoted in the foregoing pages is clear. The chapter which follows will illustrate that students enact their discontent in ways that threaten school stability.

Students outnumber teachers. Increasingly, the force of law is shifting to the side of the formerly powerless. This poses a basic question: in the face of growing student power how can the necessary authority survive in schools?

If these are the issues, what are the solutions?

There are no easy answers. In the words of folk-singer Bob Dylan, "The times, they are a-changing." Student unrest and school disruption comes from the fact that the high schools lag in adapting to the surrounding social change. Schools cling to traditions of the past, little heeding the rising aspirations of black people, the growing quest for participatory democracy, and the dynamically different world of the 1970's.

Chapter 2

FOUR CASE HISTORIES

Most of the conflict in the high schools of the United States is related to problems of race. This will be evident in three of the cases presented in this chapter. Case number four presents something different.

These stories of troubled schools are real. In the first account I write as a participant, for I was the embattled principal of Montclair High School in New Jersey when it went through its ordeal. Because I accept responsibility for the failures and successes there, that school is identified by name. In gathering data through interviews in other schools, assurances of anonymity were necessary; therefore, the names of these schools are fictitious. The chronology of events and the description of each school and community, however, are accurate.

The four schools in this sampling were chosen for specific reasons. Each one has distinct and significant characteristics.

Montclair High School's black students come primarily from middle class families. The high school has had about the same proportion of black students for twenty years. The focal point of the problem was the striving of black students to have a racially exclusive Black Student Union.

Westville High School has an air of wholesomeness which is more apparent than real. There a deep well of grievance and discontent in black students flamed again and again, despite repeated but superficial "resolutions" of the problem.

City High School had undergone a drastic change in population during the past decade. Deep antagonisms between the white students from blue-collar families and the growing numbers of black students defied reconciliation. Disorder erupted repeatedly.

Longfellow High School's difference is that it has an all-white, upper middle class group of students. Nonetheless, this is the *one* high school which I visited which had been the scene of a knifing. It took ingenious administrative tactics to resolve the bitter feud between conservative and leftist students in this school.

So much for preliminaries. The scene now shifts to the high schools.

Montclair, New Jersey is a suburb of New York City. It is an upper middle class town of 43,000 people, about 30 percent of whom are Negro. The Negro population includes a high proportion of professional and management people. Most of the breadwinners commute to New York City or to other neighboring urban centers.

The high school in the community has been integrated for years, but many of its grade schools were still segregated to a large extent at the time of this incident.

During the past two years there had been increasing signs of separatism in Montclair High's student body of 2300. Black students gathered to eat in one sector of the cafeteria; whites did likewise. Segregated housing patterns in the city were reflected in black-white separation in school.

The year before the trouble, black students decided to form a

Black Student Union. Their purpose, they said, was to foster “black pride, black self-awareness, self-respect, and black self-determination.” Viewing this as a positive event, I discussed it with the school superintendent. We agreed to approve the Black Student Union as a school organization. We preferred to have it operate in the open so that school officials would have knowledge of its aims and programs rather than to have it operating underground and perhaps bringing the school some unwelcome surprises. I made two stipulations: the club should operate with the advice and consent of a faculty sponsor, and it should admit any white students who wanted to join. The school could not sponsor a racially segregated organization.

The conditions were accepted—though with little enthusiasm. The B.S.U. did a great deal of organizational work in the spring and held a few meetings. Sometimes two or three white students attended, sometimes not. At a June meeting, the black students made it clear that the three white girls present were unwelcome; the meeting did not begin until they left.

From the outset, parents, teachers, and white students had had many questions. “Is this really all right?” “What’s it going to do?” “What kind of an organization is it going to be?” Some black parents also joined in asking such questions. As principal, I justified the B.S.U. in terms of its own goals; I heartily supported its aims of raising the aspirations of students and generating pride. Besides, it was *not* a racially exclusive group. I could only defend it on that basis. So I told the advisor that we must have no repetition of the incident of excluding whites from meetings.

In September, a white student was barred from a B.S.U. meeting again. I met with the sponsor of the B.S.U. and with some of its leaders, citing the state law which prohibited any school organization from restricting its membership. Both the students and the sponsor, a black teacher, refused to be persuaded. They claimed that after suffering many decades of discrimination against black people in defiance of the law, *they* were entitled to ignore it. This and subsequent discussions with the sponsor convinced me that I could not impose the requirement of open membership without a change in advisors. I notified the sponsor accordingly

and secured the agreement of another black teacher to replace her in that role.

That afternoon, the B.S.U. members learned of my decision. The following school day opened dramatically. As I walked into the building a few minutes before eight a.m., one of my assistants gave me a copy of a handbill that the black students were distributing on the sidewalk in front of the building. The handbill enjoined all black "brothers" to meet in the school amphitheater to protest the "oppressive tactics of the administration." By 8:05 when the late bell rang 60 or 70 students were already assembled in the amphitheater. I went among them saying: "Go to home-room; you're late. If you want a protest meeting, have it at three o'clock!" The students refused and remained where they were. Soon the numbers rose to almost four hundred. Police came. Parents got the word and came to observe. Someone sent for the mayor.

The protest rally, led by a black senior boy, started. He spoke of the "white devil in the office." He derided the attempt to "integrate our organization—you dilute the coffee when you put cream in it." He said: "We're going to sit out here until they give our advisor back. If it takes until cold weather, we'll move into the cafeteria and protest there." There were loud cheers and applause.

I went to the front of the amphitheater. When the crowd quieted enough for me to be heard, I stated that I had no intention of trying to destroy the B.S.U., but that the open membership requirement was something that had to be met. I did not refer to the advisor issue, thinking it impossible to deal with this in the crowd situation.

The black students did not accept that; they felt it was some sort of bureaucratic dodge to destroy their organization. This legal issue was to them a contrived one; the reality was that the Black Student Union was being integrated.

Fifteen minutes later I met with the leaders of the B.S.U. in my office. The superintendent of schools arrived. The mayor—a black man—joined the meeting and was welcomed in the role of mediator. After two or three hours of negotiations a compromise

was reached. The original advisor was to be reinstated and the B.S.U. agreed to develop bylaws to conform with the state law. Until the bylaws were presented and approved, the B.S.U. would conduct no other activities.

All was well until two or three days later when nine black students, including several B.S.U. leaders, were suspended for one day for disorderly behavior at a pep rally. Claiming that the suspensions were discriminatory and simply retribution for leadership in the amphitheater protest of a few days earlier, the black students initiated a wave of serious disorders. Students overturned trays in the cafeteria, false alarms were pulled on the school's fire alarm boxes, and a rash of fights occurred in and around school—black against white and vice-versa. Rumors reached fever pitch. Absence doubled as fearful parents kept children at home. Many parents tried to enroll their children in private schools and high schools in neighboring communities. Police and firemen were brought in, but the tension did not subside. It was worse in the cafeteria where the self-segregating seating arrangements took on the aspect of two warring camps separated in the middle by the school's administrative personnel and plainclothesmen.

Order and harmony had to be restored to the school. The first step was to quell the violence. My meeting with the superintendent and Board of Education culminated in a decision to operate school on an abbreviated schedule for the remaining two days of the week, eliminating lunch periods. This removed one danger. Moreover, assistant principals from junior high schools, plainclothesmen from the police department, and firemen augmented the influence of the school's administrative staff.

As these plans were made, a group of responsible student leaders met in my home, along with a helpful history teacher, to plan assemblies that would restore student attitudes of responsibility, confidence, and mutual respect. These assemblies were held with great effect just before students left for home at the end of the week. They were well-planned and entirely student-run.

When school opened on Monday things were much calmer. Each day thereafter saw a gradual withdrawal of the outside forces, along with the development of a very "tight" procedure for

monitoring the passing of students in corridors. The remaining problem was to calm the panic-ridden parents in the community, but the school crisis was over.

Two approaches had worked hand-in-hand to resolve the Montclair High School crisis: strict enforcement of controls established the degree of order necessary for doing the *fundamental work of attitude rebuilding*.

* * * * *

Westville High School in Illinois is exceptionally attractive. Its low, rambling building has graceful lines. Within, brightly painted lockers and plantings of greenery decorate the corridors. Most students seem proud of this school. It is in excellent condition, looking only one or two years old instead of eight. The students have an "all-American" appearance with neat haircuts for boys and skirts of reasonable length for girls. It has 2350 students of whom 6 percent are black. All outward appearances suggest a favored school, the ideal high school of the typical American community.

The year before my visit, however, trouble had occurred. As in many high schools throughout the country, the conflict had been triggered by the absence of a black cheerleader. Several black girls had practiced intensively, and they and their supporters were outraged when all five girls elected by the judging committee were white.

The principal met a delegation of the protesters and quickly recognized the seriousness of this problem as seen by the black students. His solution was to name a black runner-up as an alternate cheerleader. Unfortunately the Board of Education reversed this decision a few days later. Black students promptly demonstrated their outrage by disorder in the cafeteria. Chairs were overturned, food was thrown, and the episode was reported in the community as a riot.

Faced with punishment for this activity, many black students boycotted classes in protest against what they deemed oppressive tactics. The administration not only declared the absences unauthorized, to be punished automatically by denial of make-up

privileges, but imposed a few days' suspension as additional punishment. The black students saw this action as new provocation and replied with another round of disorders.

One Monday the following autumn, a delegation of black students complained to the principal that one of their soul sisters had been hit by a bottle after the weekend football game. The bottle had come from a group of white students. The principal asked the police to investigate the matter. Police came to the school and began to interview various students, but they failed to identify the assailant.

As the day progressed, black students met to discuss their grievance. The dean of student discipline stopped the meeting on the ground that it was interrupting classes. The school had established a policy that meetings for any purpose had to be held at times which would not interfere with class attendance.

But the unrest was not to be stopped by edict. The father of a black student telephoned the school to protest the curtailment of the meeting, pointing out its urgency to his son and others. When the principal explained the reason and agreed to meet with the student leaders the next day, the father seemed satisfied and the problem appeared to be resolved.

What was *not* on the principal's schedule for the next day, however, was another student protest meeting in the cafeteria. Nonetheless, it occurred. Two eighteen-year-old black school drop-outs entered the cafeteria to counsel their soul brothers. Discovered, they left upon request but not the student protesters. Ignoring the homeroom bell and the principal's orders to move, the students remained in the cafeteria, expressing their disgust at what they felt was inadequate action in behalf of the girl who had been hit by the bottle. Frustrated and stymied, the principal called the police. Upon their arrival the principal went to the cafeteria and called the students to order. He told them that they must leave the building immediately, and that they would be counted as truant. After ten minutes and no compliance with the order, the principal asked the police to escort the students from the building. The students obeyed the directions of the police and left; they boarded waiting busses, and went home.

Now that the trouble was temporarily resolved again, the principal announced on the public address system that there had been a sit-in with no physical incidents. Soon students went on their way to class . . . except for those who had been escorted home.

The following day many black parents came to Westville High in response to the principal's request to discuss the reinstatement of their children. Again events did not proceed according to administrative plan. Once at school the parents rallied to the support of their children and strongly requested a general meeting to discuss recent events.

The meeting was lively. Parents did not accept the principal's justification of his decisions. Soon the superintendent came, upon request. The parents' ranks enlarged to about 80. Students drifted in. The meeting broke up when the superintendent upheld all the principal's actions and refused to grant amnesty to any students. About 60 students left the meeting and went to the cafeteria, mingling with others there. Five fights took place in the cafeteria and in adjacent corridors. The principal describes it: "We were breaking up fights. There was a tremendous amount of yelling and screaming. The police were called. In order to establish control, they cordoned off the area and again escorted offending students from the building. A bus took them home. The fight actually didn't last more than one or two minutes. It's tough to judge time; when you're in the midst of it one of these things seems like an hour!"

Asked if there were any serious injuries during the course of the fight, the principal replied: "None whatsoever; most of it was a fling and then the students ran, you know. There were a couple of chairs thrown."

It all sounds very rational as presented by the high school principal. So rational that the crux of the problem is lost.

One black girl's account of the cafeteria episode reveals the emotional reality of the scene and shows the residue of deep bitterness and resentment.

After the meeting in the Little Theater where the superintendent was lying to our parents, some of us got fed up with

that scene and we came into the cafeteria. We come in there and the white kids' leader—a big football player—and his friends are all sitting there at one table. As soon as we walk in he and his big muscular athlete buddies stand up as though they want to fight, so automatically you see this and you go to it. The police are already there when the fight starts. Chairs start flying and McNally was beating Chucky over the head with a chair. By the time I got there everything was beginning to calm down—black kids over here and white kids over there. Then the policemen moved in with their clubs. I know they had clubs, because the creep that was so nice to me the day before and asked to hold my books was walking in the door carrying a club. It really got me. There were about 300 white kids in the cafeteria to us 30 black kids, and how in the world could we beat up all 300 kids? It would be impossible. Not that I was really scared, but a lot could have happened. Some kids could have been killed. Instead of keeping the white kids back, the police come in and surround us and start beating us out of the cafeteria. Punching you in the back, really using their sticks.

Lynn was on the floor like this. It was so ridiculous; just like herding a bunch of cattle out of somewhere. Me and my friend Charlene, we sat on a table and the cop came swishing his stick to get off. I got off, but he drags Charlene onto the floor. I was trying to help Charlene get up and then the cop starts pushing me toward the door. Charlene, she's bigger than I am and she's very emotional. And all the time kids are getting hit with chairs and kids are getting sprayed with mace in the face, chairs getting dropped on their heads. Black kids were the only ones that got hurt, the only kids that were arrested. He said to Charlene and me, "You're under arrest!" I said, "For what?" and he couldn't say. So he backs me up into the corner and Charlene is screaming and then Charlene's aunt comes in and this is some more trouble. But what got me was, I thought it was unnecessary to handcuff kids. Like me, I'm not big. [The narrator is a petite girl, about 4'11"—pretty, with an afro-haircut and an upturned nose.]

And I'd dropped my bag and this other kid was holding it up and I said, "Let me get it," but the cop says, "No, you get back over there," and then they put handcuffs on me—behind my back no less. I didn't know why I was arrested. I hadn't said anything to the creep or anything, you know. I guess he thought I was a militant.

What got me was this: It's just normal sense that when you're trying to break up any kind of a fight—if two brothers of mine were fighting I wouldn't jump on them and beat them all up—you try to separate them and let it cool down. Well, in the cafeteria I saw them hitting Bucky with a big, old club, breaking his glasses. I started to move away and then a cop started pushing me back with a club. That was all right, 'cause it wasn't hurting me; I was just kind of mad. Then he turned it around to the end and jabbed me in the stomach. When he jabbed me in the stomach I went down; I hadn't had anything to eat anyhow, and my stomach was growling, so when I bent down I said: "Uhhh," and when I came back up that's when he sprayed me with the mace. It sprayed right in my mouth and it was really burning. It was burning like acid and got in my eyes so I couldn't see. Later, when I got out my mother was here. All the black parents were there.

Later the policemen went around saying: "Did you hear all the names those black kids were calling us?" Wouldn't you call somebody a name if they had a club and you didn't have anything? If you can't beat anybody, you're going to release your feelings and cuss them out. We were calling them every name in the book.

All that stuff that happened that day was a hard thing. It was pretty bad. But for days after that we were together as black people, and I feel that's the only good thing that came out of it for the black kids. The white man made some bad mistakes if he wants to keep us subservient. He did wrong, and he made us get together. You ask any one of these kids that were in that mess. They might joke about it a little, but if it came down to it again, I betcha we'd be all together.

Small wonder that there were new “flare-ups” after each attempt to suppress the disruption. Despite the architectural harmony of the school building, the all-American appearance and complacency of the white students, this school was not wholesome when a significant though small part of its students felt and said: “I can’t stand none of the people here; there’s no hope for this school. All me and Charlene and Bucky want is to *get out!*”

* * * * *

“What is your business here, sir?” asked the burly plain-clothesman as I entered the lobby of City High School. As I answered, I noticed two other men—evidently security personnel of some kind—in the front corridor. Shortly afterward, I learned that 30 policemen were regularly employed to keep order in this school of about three thousand students. Unusual, to say the least!

“This school surely has changed,” recounts a teacher with 29 years of service in City High. “The change has been very gradual during the past decade, but within the past couple of years it has been drastic. Members of the white community have moved out to the suburbs and blacks have moved in from the South. Five years ago there were about 20 percent black students in the school; now it is well over 50 percent—the blacks are in the majority now.”

The teacher proceeds to speak about race in relation to academic *quality*: “Yes, a substantial portion of these black students have moved here recently from the South. They’re rather different from the black boys and girls that have been born and brought up right here in this city. We’ve had a very fine type of colored student here in the past; I’ve taught many of them that I’ve thought a great deal of. But the element who came from the South—many of whom were probably out of school for a time—created a different situation. When they came here they were rather shy at first. They probably hadn’t been given a fair share of anything social or academic where they came from and this was a complete new world for them. It was as if they were let out of a jail; this was freedom for them.”

This interview excerpt presents some of the ingredients of the problem in City High School. Another element is the white children of blue-collar workers who attend the school. They are described thus by the principal: "Right here is the 'Mason-Dixon Line.' You watch it at dismissal; the white kids go in that direction, the blacks head over there. That has been the battleground; at one time they had cops patrolling that whole street because it was so sensitive. It doesn't take much to upset things in that Italian-American area. Some of the parents get real upset. I get calls every day from 'Little Italy.' I get calls from Mrs. Porelli and Mrs. Lanza. They'll call me in a minute. Mrs. Porelli is vicious. It was hot here last week. A Negro boy tripped over a white girl's foot in orchestra. When he fell he grabbed her arm. As he got up she was knocked over. Of course the word that got out was that there was a black boy dragging a white girl around the area. That's all it takes! You have to be plenty careful about discipline in a case like that. You have to take psychological factors into consideration in dealing with the public, too. Otherwise the hate comes out; it's right here—you better believe it."

This is the setting in a school that has "blown" repeatedly. Here are examples of its past crises.

Three times City High School "blew" during the year before the author's visit to it. The first outbreak occurred in the cafeteria one day in December. In an effort to build student responsibility, the principal had allowed a squad of senior athletes to supervise the student cafeteria. One day as a black student started to leave during the lunch period, a white leader of the cafeteria monitor squad told him to stop. The discussion of the boy's right to leave led to name-calling. As the boy started to leave, the angry student monitor threw a chair at him. The ensuing fight—in which a number of other students joined—was broken up quite promptly, and the two boys were taken to the office for discipline. Despite the fact that the trouble appeared to be resolved by having the two combatants leave the principal's office and shake hands where other students could observe the reconciliation, rumors spread through the school that the black protagonist had been seriously injured and severely disciplined, while nothing had happened to the white monitor. There was no further fighting that day.

On the following day a fight between a group of white and black students occurred in the schoolyard during the noon hour. It spread first to the cafeteria and then generally throughout the school. When it became evident that the school was hopelessly out of control, the principal sent everyone home. As students left the school in large groups, windows of business establishments were smashed, and some persons were injured. Some groups of students milled about on the city streets throughout the afternoon and evening.

The next day school reopened, although attendance was lower than usual. The mayor came to the high school to try to assist in resolving the problem. Their many grievances about the school became evident when he asked the students to state their complaints. Thirty-one were listed, pointing up problems of dissatisfaction with school procedures, policies, and personnel.

After the weekend, the appearance of a delegation of black parents and students at the high school office suggested that concern about the operation of the school had spread to adults through the ministerial association and the local chapter of the N.A.A.C.P. These adults and a small group of students requested that certain unpopular assistant principals and disciplinarians come and answer questions about their practices. They came; the meeting reached a high emotional pitch, and was cut off by the order of the administrator in charge. The students left and ran through the halls, and disorder erupted in the cafeteria. Food and dishes were thrown about, and a false fire alarm was sounded in the building. The school was in chaos. As a result of boycotts and other troubles, school was closed prematurely for the Christmas vacation period.

During the Christmas recess, necessary repairs to the building were made, some administrative practices related to discipline and attendance were changed, the assistance of plainclothes police was secured, the activities program was expanded, and a faculty council was appointed. School re-opened on January 2 without incident.

Two months later trouble occurred again. The last day of February, even before school began, a large group of young whites, including some nonstudents, came into the school and began molesting black students. As the morning continued, more of this

activity was reported, and black students began retaliating. As the situation got out of hand, school was dismissed. Several arrests were made and 38 students were suspended. School opened on the following Monday with large numbers of uniformed police present to maintain order. Some school activities were cancelled.

About a month later, City High School—like many other high schools throughout the land—felt the effects of administrative failure to recognize in any way the nation's loss of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The attempts to run a "business as usual" school day were met with disorders which closed the school for a week.

The next episode of the City High School story was symbolic. One day in homeroom two black students refused to participate in the flag ceremony. They were told that they had a right not to salute or repeat the pledge to the flag but that they must stand in silence if they did not participate. Denying that they had respect for the flag of a racist country, the students refused to stand. For this disobedience of the teacher's authority, the two boys were suspended.

The following Tuesday about 30 black students picketed in protest of the suspension. The picketing by these students led to many other protest activities: class boycotts, sit-ins, and a demand for a meeting with the school superintendent. The day's disruptive activities reached their dramatic peak in the cafeteria. The cafeteria is used not only for lunch, but for study halls. A black citizen who wished to champion the cause of the young people in school entered the cafeteria while some 200 students were studying there. Using a bull horn, he spoke to the students about the alleged injustices facing them. He concluded his speech with a call to action—he asked all students to walk out of school in protest. The response to his call was limited. Not all students walked out; not even the 200 students sitting in the cafeteria walked out. About 70 students joined him to march on city hall to press for improved conditions at the school.

Commenting on the limited effect of the "call to action" in the cafeteria, a teacher said: "That day, the classes in school weren't even disturbed; school went on as usual. I think the majority of students always felt that education came first and were rather

upset. This was particularly true of the academic students who felt they were losing so much with all the interruptions when we closed school. I believe they decided it just wasn't worthwhile getting involved; I think this was true for Negro students as well as white. To me this is a hopeful sign."

There are a number of lessons to be learned from the City High School story. A clear and practical one is that *the cafeteria is the hot spot*. This is the most problem-prone area in a school, and the lunch hour is the most critical time of the day. Most of the principals in the scores of disrupted high schools throughout the country would testify to this.

A second message that emerges from this is to avoid holding mass protest meetings or confrontations in school during the school day. This should not be misinterpreted as advice to avoid communication and negotiation. Far from it. These processes should and must occur, but under optimum conditions. These conditions include dealing with a moderate-sized working group of leaders. A mass meeting of 300 people excited about emotionally charged issues will probably turn into a shouting match. Though the discharge of emotions may have its place, the principal or superintendent should not weaken his position nor decrease his effectiveness by public participation in it. Instead, he should arrange to meet with leaders of the antagonistic group. A number of benefits will come from holding such a meeting outside the school, not the least of which is avoiding the "spill-over" phenomenon described earlier in this chapter when a few disenchanted people left the meeting shouting, "that man ain't goin' to do nothin'; they just talkin' in here. We might better start some action if we want things made right!"

In a situation like this one at City High School, the basic and fundamental fact is that many, perhaps most, of the 3000 individuals in that school harbor suspicion, distrust, and fear, sometimes mixed with hatred, for people of the other race. It is these damaging feelings which cause people of both races to use the wrong words in talking to others, to misinterpret ambiguous looks or statements, to overreact to situations, and to fight. One may resolve specific conflicts, like having the black and white boys who

fought shake hands in public, and one may tinker with the school program in such ways as adding a course in hotel management or assigning thirty policemen to the building. But, as the history at City High School has shown, this will have little permanent effect. The fundamental issue of cancerous human relations must be recognized and solutions must be addressed *to that problem*.

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Longfellow High School is different from the other three schools. As I interviewed students there, and tried to draw from them a characterization of the upper class, all-white, mainly college-bound population, a senior boy interrupted my groping questions saying: "The kids here are rich and smart, if that's what you're saying. At least that is what everybody says."

This Maryland school is unusual in sending 95 percent of its graduates to college. Other parts of its story are even more unusual.

Early in the fall the more radical or dissident students had been conducting some activities in the quadrangle during lunch hour. Restive about a number of things, they met in small groups to hold informal discussions. One day it became evident that more was going on than just groups sitting around and talking. About a dozen students decided to have a demonstration and they wore black armbands. Some of them carried black flags. The narrative is continued by one of the teachers:

I'm not sure that all the members of the group knew just what it was that they were protesting. Some of them said that they were protesting the smoking regulations here at the school and the penalty for being caught smoking—suspension for three days. Others were protesting different issues. One of the members of the group, when questioned, said that she was protesting the failure of the gun-control law to go through the Congress. Somebody else claimed they were celebrating Lenin's birthday.

Amidst all this, one of the leftist students persuaded his col-

leagues to hold a demonstration in the school office, so they marched inside. About a dozen entered and proceeded to demonstrate. The protest seemed to reflect a general discontent about the school, including opposition to rules and regulations which students considered unnecessary and unjustifiable.

The Longfellow High teacher continues his account:

When the leftist students got into the building some of the more conservative boys got into a hassle with them. There were some obscenities exchanged, and there was pushing and shoving. However, things did not get too far out of hand. But it obviously was a tense situation. So far as I know, there was no faculty or administrative intervention in this little fracas. At the moment that seemed to be the end of it.

The following day a very tense situation developed out in the quadrangle. Some of the more conservative students began to threaten the small groups of dissidents. During the middle lunch period, a junior boy was found in one of our lavatories, beaten up and unconscious. He belonged to the liberal camp, though he had not been very actively engaged in any of the demonstrations. He had even been nicked by a razor! Because his assailants evidently had attacked him from behind, he was unable to identify them. But they had beaten him badly.

There were no racial overtones of any kind to this; remember, this is an *all-white school*.

Word of the assault began to spread like wildfire through the student body, and additional tension developed. Some students wanted to come to school armed, prepared for any eventuality. The leftist students wanted to invite sympathizers from neighboring schools to come over and help them defend themselves. We teachers did our very best to dissuade them from such a course of action and we were successful. One of our suggestions was that all further demonstrations must cease until things cooled down.

Two policemen came to the school. Their presence evidently had a helpful effect. At any rate, there was no further aggressive episode in this electrically-charged school day.

Perhaps the most important part of the Longfellow High School incident is the way the trouble was resolved. The principal convened about 150 students in the cafeteria. He conducted this meeting in an unstructured fashion. After explaining that the school had been experiencing a very unusual situation, he invited the students present, one at a time, briefly to state their viewpoints. As the principal called on people to speak, several things began to emerge.

Those representing the largest group of students were saying: "We think this business that is going on here is nonsense; it is an unnecessary interference with our education, and we want to be able to go to school without this kind of threat."

The more conservative kids said: "We think that all those hippies with their long hair and freakish clothing should not be allowed in school. If they can't conform, kick 'em out!"

The leftist kids were saying: "Look, we can say what we want; it's part of our education. We've got a right to wear our hair the way we want and to dress the way we want. These things are personal rights in a democratic society."

After the initial airing of differences, the principal asked the group of students, "What do you think we should do about it?" Getting no answer, he said that he believed most of those present fell into one of five different groups: the leftists, the conservatives, the varsity athlete-cheerleader group, the Student Council, and the middle-of-the-road students. He declared that he would select one person from each group and that they would each select four others. This group would meet together for the rest of the day, if necessary, in order to seek a solution to the problem. One teacher would be present to help.

This resource teacher when interviewed, reported: "It was a very intense, very exciting confrontation. At first, as the problem was explored generally, all sorts of accusations were made. 'You hippies are the cause of all the trouble!' 'You greasers are just a bunch of morons!' But we managed to keep the lid on it."

A significant breakthrough occurred when one of the more

conservative girls said to an agitated boy: "Why are you wearing that arm-band, anyway?" He replied, that he was protesting the assault on the boy found in the washroom. The girl then said: "Ohhh . . . so *that's* what it means. If I'd known that before . . . I don't think it was right for that boy to be beaten up, either. But your wearing that arm-band gets in the way of your saying that to me."

And so the boy took off his black arm-band.

There were one or two similar revelations of personal attitudes and values, and soon students in the reconciliation team came to stop using the stereotyped labels "greasers" and "hippies" and began calling one another by name.

At noon, the meeting adjourned for lunch. As students went from the meeting room word began to spread through the school that things were being worked out, that the students were reaching some agreement, although it was not clear exactly what the specifics of agreement were.

As the afternoon progressed, the students in the peace-making meeting, with the help of the insightful resource teacher, came to discover some of their common values and agreements. They also began to develop enough mutual trust to begin working out their differences.

A specific outgrowth of the meeting was a mimeographed report summarizing the day's discussion. This was distributed before students went home that day. An assembly was planned to further air and explain the situation.

The teacher who was interviewed said: "We did have the assembly and it went well enough, but the fuse already had been removed from the situation by the process described earlier. The intergroup conflict in the school had been pretty much resolved."

The story of Longfellow High shows that not all conflict occurs where black and white students are in school together. White students by themselves are capable of generating real trouble—even to the point of knifing. But what has most value for positive application elsewhere is the way the problem was solved. This was a two-fold strategy: the principal recognized the factions which really existed in the school; then he provided arrangements for

the leaders of these factions to accept the school's problem as *theirs* and to use their collective strength and resources to solve it.

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Four accounts of high school conflict have been presented. Several passing inferences have been drawn. Further implications of many of these ideas will be presented in subsequent chapters.

A concluding thought: There is an important difference between educational leadership which determines to avert all signs of conflict in a school system and educational leadership which insists that though conflict may be inevitable it will be resolved fairly, with reasonable promptness, and to the benefit of all. Conflict can be prevented. It is held to a minimum by the Franco government in Spain. This and other dictatorships are admired by some Americans. School conflict in the South has also been negligible. The reasons are evident. As New York University professor of sociology, Dan W. Dodson, writes: "All of us know that if there is freedom there is going to be conflict." He goes on to say that educators are loathe to tolerate conflict in their schools because it is embarrassing to them, but he comments that it is unwise to stamp out conflict before it has achieved its purpose. "Sometimes a carbuncle has to be lanced," writes Dodson, "and you only prolong the suffering if you put ointment on it to keep the festering from coming to a head. There is a great danger in . . . using the status of [public] office to keep change from happening."¹

The powerful social forces at work in the United States must be recognized. Some changes in schools are overdue and will occur. This is not to say that school authorities should simply get out of the way and let the revolution come. Rather, they should gird themselves for conflict and prepare to participate in it wisely and fairly.

Chapter 3

THE TIMES AND SOCIAL FORCES

There are strong forces shaping American society. Change is occurring at an unprecedented rate. Because we are a part of our times, it requires deliberate effort to draw back and identify the prime forces and events which are affecting our society, the habitat of our youth.

This chapter will note some discouraging aspects of the international and domestic newsfront which affect youth. To a large degree, these explain the hedonism of the student generation. Also important is the context of advertising in shaping attitudes, along with its media which, according to Marshall McLuhan, may eclipse the message.

Negative attitudes toward authority are central to rebellion.

Several social forces are reducing people's willingness to conform to authority. Among these is the affluence born of technology which makes individuals relatively independent of other persons. Basic changes in family life and in the church also play their part. Existentialism plays an important part in the thinking and attitudes of American youth and therefore has its influence upon student unrest.

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The ominous mushroom cloud over Hiroshima presaged the troubled cold war era in international relations. As we move into the 1970's, the gathering storm clouds are many. The brutality of armed conflict short of global nuclear war is dramatized by pictures and posters depicting the devastating effects of napalm and the dehumanizing atrocities and numbing death toll of the Vietnam War.

The dark clouds of warfare are matched by the grimey brown-out of air space that one observes upon flying toward New York, Los Angeles, or any other major city. The atmosphere is thick with the fumes of industrial air pollution. The water in the harbors and rivers below is fouled with the industrial waste and sewage spewed out by overpopulated cities and towns. News items, magazine articles, and television programs warn that our health is threatened by air and water pollution, and that campaigns to correct these ills make little headway against the inertia of government and the opposition of industry.

In view of this gloom in contemporary American life it is quite understandable that a philosophy of hedonism is gaining in popularity. Among more and more American youth the attitude appears to be "eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die." Or, adding a postscript, "eat, drink, and be merry, get high and make love," brings the age-old call to pleasure up-to-date for the 1970's.

Advertising is a prime social force in western society. Measured in dollars, it is one of the largest American industries. Messages of advertising are not limited to governing people's responses to commercial products. Beyond this principal goal, advertising has auxiliary effects in shaping attitudes.

Whether one is selling automobiles, clothes, or cosmetics, the appeal is to be young, vital, and impulsive, to be attractive to the opposite sex, to gain power, and to experience pure pleasure—buy the higher priced whiskey or automobile because you deserve it. How vividly the television commercial depicts pleasure; the inhalation of cigarette smoke, the sigh of kinetic satisfaction as one sinks into a favorite chair with a favorite drink, or luxuriantly accepts the warm perfumed sensation of newly-shampooed hair. “Take advantage . . . you’ve got the edge. Youth. Daring. Imagination. Widen the Generation Gap!” urges one clothing advertisement. The recurrent exaltation of youth in high-powered advertising *must* reinforce the students’ self-concept of power, importance, and omniscience.

Innovation is a magic word. It secures support for social improvement schemes through funding by foundations and by government. In urban planning, academic reform, and industrial expansion the cybernetic revolution has given us computer-developed data facilitating new combinations of ideas and new views of things. Innovation and creativity got an added impetus in the mid-1950’s when psychological research recognized creativity as a human characteristic as important as other aspects of intelligence. Innovation became necessary as the burgeoning United States population and new levels of affluence created tremendous pressures on everything from the post office system to air transportation. Rare is the executive personnel evaluation or the job description that does not cite “ability to innovate” as one of the desiderata.

So today’s youth mature in an era when to be innovative is honorable and worthy; to be skeptical of the status quo is smart. These values have been integral to American education for years. “Facts you can look up in encyclopedias and world almanacs,” pedagogues have declared. “We shall teach you how to *think*. Computers can provide answers; the unique gift of man is to *ask questions*.” And long before the advent of computers, teachers of the scientific method have urged students from junior high school onward to assume a skeptical attitude. “Question the superficial appearance of things; probe beneath the facile explanations.” This

is all summed up by Emery Curtice, principal of Berkeley High School, who says: "For the last twenty years they have been taught how to think, not what to think, and as a result they're vociferous and express their views in their actions."¹

Two social forces as old as mankind are the pressures toward gaining wealth and the pressures toward gaining power. These are a part of self-preservation. As our national wealth increases, so does the wealth of individuals. As consumer products are produced more economically than ever before wealth becomes more conspicuous. Power is an American symbol which is eulogized through advertising and through the new media. The message to a person growing up in contemporary American society is very clear that life is a power struggle between the races, between labor and management, between the United States and other governments, and between consumers and manufacturers.

Certain major concerns rise above the general turmoil of American society. If war—cold and hot—is one of these and the youth revolution is another, then the remaining major social issue is the topic of race and ethnic relations in all its complexity.

The polyglot population of the United States which used to be divided geographically is now being mixed within regions. School populations show this. In the past the urban Jews, Southern Negroes, West Coast Orientals, Appalachian whites, and other groups with specific value systems lived largely unto themselves. Within any of these groups individuals understood the standards and personal styles of one another. They were little concerned with the affairs of other racial or ethnic groups.

All that has changed and is still changing. World War II caused great population shifts as the draft uprooted men and families and defense industries beckoned workers to the cities. Between 1950 and 1955 12 million people moved to metropolitan areas of the United States, yet the cities themselves grew by only 2.5 million. This apparent discrepancy was caused by the exodus of middle class whites to the suburbs as they were displaced in the cities by minority groups—predominantly Negroes.² With this shift in population the pluralistic nature of American society is becoming unmistakable. This mixture of people in communities and in

schools causes a need to understand cultural differences; in the absence of such understanding, a "culture clash" occurs among students and between student and teacher.

In the last 15 years court action has put race in the spotlight. The Supreme Court's desegregation decision of 1954 put the topic of race high on the national agenda. The influence of black leaders, especially Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X, made it clear that black people will have a fully equal role in our society.

The many writings, speeches, and encounters on racial matters have generated confusion in many minds. Liberal whites have worked hard for the cause of racial equality and then have been dismayed at rebuffs by black people who seemed no longer to want their help. There is confusion in the rhetoric of black separatists. Columnist Art Buchwald (*Newark Evening News*, March 13, 1969) satirized it in an imaginary conversation between a KKK man and a black militant. The Ku Klux Klaner says: "You should have your own restaurants, your own hotels, your own movie theaters, and your own place on trains." The black militant replies: "Hey, that's crazy! You white cats are working for the same thing we are! You know I usually won't talk to a white man, but you're different; you're working for the same things we're working for."

The moderate black person catches it from both sides. He was never fully accepted in a white society, and now he finds himself treated scornfully by his own people. They call him an "Uncle Tom" or "handkerchief head" when he advocates an integrated American society.

Perhaps the only one not confused by all these developments is the bigoted white who always opposed the gains of black people and now sees more reason than ever for doing so. Yet this world is changing too, as black people appear in newspaper and magazine advertisements in every section of the country and as real black personalities, not mere racial stereotypes, are projected on television shows.

Violence is a venerable tradition in America. Today, television gives new currency to this national experience as well as to the violence elsewhere in the world. The National Association for Better Broadcasting has estimated that the average child between

the ages of five and fifteen watches the violent destruction of more than 13,400 lives on television. Recently, during one week of evening television watching, including Saturday morning's children's shows, 84 killings and 372 other acts of violence were witnessed.³

News reporting, especially on television which is inherently action-oriented, gives the vivid and the sensational disproportionate coverage. This has been especially true of campus revolts. Television photographers focus on the most active participants in a crowd scene and the young revolutionaries who are "on camera" communicate their intense feelings, words, and actions to millions of viewers.

Another aspect of television and other visual media which must be considered is its qualitative effect upon the way people perceive and think. Marshall McLuhan has written extensively about the implications of changes in the media. Today's students respond to a new style in film-making and television. Producers of visual media are discerning the unique potential of their material and tools: the action progresses at a dizzying pace; the viewer is swept into the film-story with ingenious effects, engulfed by the cinerama wide screen, and bombarded by kaleidoscopic images; part of the film's message may be presented by abstractions, by cinema-collage, or animation. The same devices are seen in some television commercials (preferred by many young people to the programs).

Today's youth are not confined to the orderly one-at-a-time presentation of ideas characterizing written communications. They enjoy a non-linear bombardment of symbols, colors, sounds, and motion. These mind-expanding artistic experiences widen the generation gap between students and their teachers. The conventional school experience pales in contrast with the strobe light shows and hard rock music which adolescents really dig.

The drug scene is part of it. In Michigan, for example, available studies show that 10 to 50 percent of teen-agers in secondary schools have smoked marijuana. Dr. Ralph D. Rabinovitch, Director of Hawthorn Center, a children's psychiatric hospital in Northville, Michigan, comments that increased drug use by teen-agers is a clear sign of a deeply disturbed generation. According to

Rabinovitch there is no doubt that mental and emotional problems among young people are increasing, both in number and severity.

Some social scientists attribute increases in adolescent drug use to academic pressures, status pressures, and the mass media. Rabinovitch characterizes the largest group of teen-age drug users as "tragically empty kids who are pleasure oriented. . . . They had a poor value system before they started drugs."⁴

As our society becomes more technological people become more individualistic. A ten-year study of the relationship between technology and society being made by a team of Harvard scholars has resulted in some interesting observations. The director, Dr. Immanuel G. Mesthene, comments upon the richness and diversity of our highly technological society, saying that it has given most Americans a greater range of personal choice, wider experience, and a more highly developed sense of self-worth than ever before: "The generation of knowledge and the use of technology are so much a part of the style and self-image of our own society that men begin to experience themselves, their power, and their relationships to nature and history in terms of open possibility, hope and self-confidence."⁵ A further observation was that the individual also has come to make bolder and more aggressive demands on governments at a time when the decline of authority and the sheer complexity of problems have made governments less self-confident than ever. Instead of an Orwellian 1984 society, the individual is coming increasingly into his own, aided by technology.

Authority seems to be a loser in our present society. Lewis Feuer, writing in *The Conflict of Generations*, says: "One finds that student rebellions only take place in situations where the elder generation for some reason or other has lost its moral authority; it becomes deauthorized. Now in part, in the United States the older generation is somewhat deauthorized because the racial situation has developed the feeling that liberalism hasn't altogether lived up to its principles. And also it has been partially deauthorized because it has conducted a losing war."⁶

Regardless of the specifics, one can agree with Feuer that an

anti-authority drive is part of the current American ethos. This takes many forms. The father-son antagonism is as old as Sophocles. Today it shows in resentment toward the United States government, expressed in draft card burning and the refusal of teenage entertainment idols to pay income taxes. The anti-authority drives makes headlines in such diverse ways as parents and school officials in New York City both resisting the edicts of the superintendent's office, and large numbers of Roman Catholic priests challenging the Pope's right to enforce the traditional practice of clerical celibacy. The conflict and unrest in schools and colleges — is a reflection of a larger anti-authority strain which is running through contemporary society, both in the United States and in many other parts of the world.

The American family is in trouble. The state of too many families was indicated by a comment made by a high school principal at a conference on student unrest. "In nine out of ten cases, our students who show serious personal problems in school are children of broken homes," he commented. "It used to be that when one of my assistants would say, 'This is Mary Smith; she is having trouble with a lot of her teachers,' I would at least know who her parents were. But now the first question to ask is: 'Mary Smith? What is your mother's name, Mary?' One can almost assume that there is a separation or a re-marriage. The list of pending divorces at city hall often is longer than the marriage announcements." The disintegration of the American family, which has been amply documented and discussed in recent studies, has a marked bearing upon youth's internalization of basic social values and upon their personal stability.

Church influence is also declining. One finds few people between the ages of 15 and 25 in churches on Sunday morning. Though youth may be as idealistic as ever, they are more action-oriented. Churches are not notably effective in promoting social action by their parishioners. A vivid testimonial to the declining influence of the church is the title of David Poling's recent book, *The Last Years of the Church*.⁷

The conventional religious faith of young people has waned, but this is not to say that today's students are rebels without a

cause or champions without a creed. Existentialism is a prime intellectual and spiritual influence among many of today's youth. The message of existentialism is that whatever meaning life has is not pre-ordained. One cannot depend upon God to have established truth or direction in the world. Life has such meaning as man is able to give it by his decisions and action. The universe itself is valueless and arbitrary. Hence, according to Sartre, "Man is condemned to be free." If the individual seeks significance in life, it is for him to live intensely and to seize the passing opportunities for decisive, authentic action—authentic in terms of himself and his deep inner urges. This reminds one of Freud, who advised his disciples to make inconsequential decisions carefully, weighing all the objective data available, but in the case of important decisions like the choice of a marriage partner or a crucial career opportunity, to be guided by deep impulses.

University students get this message in the philosophy classroom. Some high school students read the existentialist authors independently, some in advanced placement classes. But there are many purveyors of existentialism besides Camus and Sartre. The message is presented by many popular writers. This spirit of freedom is communicated vividly in the visual art of Paul Klee, Jackson Pollock, and countless other modern painters. It is found in the "happening" and in participatory theater. In these contemporary art experiences, the client is not a passive viewer; he is part of the action. If he begins the evening in the audience, he may find himself on stage participating in a crowd scene. If he remains in the audience, he may find that the person sitting beside him is a performer in the entertainment—and soon he will be, too.

These illustrations show that existentialism is more than pessimism or nihilism. It puts the individual into the role of acting in the knowledge of his own freedom. As one literary critic wrote, "Existentialism offers a faith that incorporates some of the rebellion that authentic faith has always wrought."⁸

We have seen that young Americans live with an uncertain future before them, that they are recipients of vast amounts of information from the vivid media of television and films, and that

changes in basic social institutions have changed their attitude toward authority. The next chapter returns to the immediate and practical and presents some of the alternatives in responding to conflict situations stimulated, in part, by the kind of student consciousness that has been described here.

Chapter 4

SOME RESPONSES TO CONFLICT

Chapter 2 presented four accounts of high school conflict. These narratives dealt mainly with disruptive activity and the issues which provoked it. This chapter will present several alternative responses to conflict of this kind.

As teachers and principals grow more familiar with student unrest, they may become able to avert trouble by identifying problems and remedying them. However, in even the best-run schools, “brush fires” of disorder appear. Those in charge must be prepared to deal with them before they turn into serious and perhaps violent situations.

At the outset, let it be recognized that there is a place for both programs of reconciliation and law-and-order responses to conflict,

although I do not endorse the abuses often masquerading behind the latter term. Depending upon what is happening in a high school, perhaps one response will be suitable, perhaps the other, perhaps both. The possibility of applying this chapter's suggestions in combination should be considered, though they must be presented singly.

The beleaguered principal whose school resounds with the chants of protesters, the footsteps of panicking students, or the frightened questions of parents seeking to remove their children from supposed danger faces a difficult situation. His ear still rings with the words of the grocer who advised him last week, "You have my support one hundred percent; just crack down on those young punks and show them who's boss!" Yet through his mind flash phrases he recently read by Professor Mark Chesler of the University of Michigan: ". . . some students know that they can close a school any time they organize to do so. . . . A militant minority of students can do things that will shut a high school down. And that is, in a sense, the ultimate power with which to threaten any school administrator. . . . He loses face in the community. It also means he may lose funds, and unless he can cajole youngsters back into the classroom he's going to be looking for a new job."¹

The beginning of mass disorder is a time for careful judgment. It also is a time when clear thinking is difficult. When scared and threatened, one tends to over-simplify the situation. Intense conflict polarizes issues. It is easy and reassuring to classify the students as "revolutionaries, threatening one of our fundamental institutions," and to see the conflict as one between *order* or *chaos*, *high standards* or *permissiveness*, *good* or *evil*. It is unfortunate that when resourcefulness and clear thinking are most needed, fear and defensiveness raise blocks in the mind.

One principal whose school erupted showed his distorted thinking in the following way. His secretary gave him an extra front door key in an envelope marked in shorthand. The principal found the cryptic envelope on his desk. He jumped to the conclusion that the strange notations were either Swahili or Arabic and that this showed that the black students now had the key to the build-

ing, a symbol of ultimate control of the school. Students have a word for a man in this condition: he's uptight.

Yet the school administration has its arsenal too, if it chooses to meet power with power. Weapons include withholding academic credit for class time missed, detention, suspension or expulsion from school, removal by police, and charging students with violation of state law.

However, most educators want to return to the school's primary business of education as quickly as possible. They fear the damaging effects of antagonism upon relations between student and school.

One response to conflict is to meet with one's adversary, sit down and discuss the differences which exist, and try to reach a compromise. Though this is a familiar idea, there are two obstacles to applying it.

The first impasse may be briefly stated in these terms: "What, me negotiate with *students!*???"

Resolute though this position may be, one should recognize that the person who says this implies that the "establishment" is 100 percent right. Are the goals of the students really completely frivolous, selfish, and wrong? In school conflicts throughout the country, among the lists of demands have been a substantial proportion of valid ones, like more guidance counselors, required courses on black history *for teachers*, and better maintenance of school building and grounds.

The second hurdle to surmount is the inflammatory rhetoric of student revolutionaries. The rhetoric of protest does little, indeed, to help a principal or superintendent react objectively. Protesters speak of non-negotiable demands, black power, student rights, blue-eyed devils, self-determination. They denounce irrelevant courses, double standards of discipline, and insensitive teachers.

Not all these watchwords should be taken at face value. For instance, consider the meaning which students attribute to "non-negotiable demands." One radical California junior told me: "Why the term 'non-negotiable' is so often used is because it serves to divide students sharply from the administration. It creates a *line* so that we don't get mixed up in collaborative strategies that

weaken our cause. Really, I doubt that any demand is completely non-negotiable, but it serves to rally student support. What actually happens is we have ten demands and the administration may offer to grant six. How can we refuse? If you take six that's better than none."

In opposition to the sound and the fury of student protesters it must be acknowledged that such tactics alienate most adults. Arbitrary manifestoes and tactics predispose the administration to stand pat. Yet there is a reason for them. Dan W. Dodson presents it, writing: "We expect the children of the powerless to compete on rules laid down by the powerful. A labor union could never be organized by Roberts' *Rules of Order*. Neither can the powerless compete where the rules are laid down by the powerful."² The fact is that playing the school game by the principal's rules seldom gets students what they want unless *he* wants it to. The attainment record of student councils proves that. If the principal says "No," students take "No" for an answer. Those students who are not satisfied to do so have found that the power plays mentioned above often accomplish more.

Suppose, after considering the pros and cons, you choose to seek a reconciliation with student protesters by some of the techniques used in parallel situations elsewhere, such as in labor relations. Where do you start?

To begin with a hard situation, take the question that is sometimes asked about academic confrontations: "How do you negotiate with someone who is so militant that he refuses to talk?" If what is stated by the militant is taken at face value, the situation is, to be sure, an impossibility. But the militant usually overstates his case for effect. In order to bring the opposing parties together, each must be convinced that his opponent can be trusted. Requisites of trusting another person are: confidence that he has the *intention* to be helpful, and confidence that he has the *ability* to be helpful.³

In a school conflict situation the principal and teachers have little reason to doubt that student protesters have the ability to cooperate *if* they are autonomous and if they are reasonably well-organized. On the other hand, if it is known that they are controlled by an outsider there is much less basis for trust in them.

Or if student protesters are so disorganized that tomorrow's ad hoc leader will not abide by agreements of today's spokesman, there is little basis for trust.

Can one assume that students have positive *intentions* which warrant faith? This depends upon the students and, particularly, upon how they regard the school. If the education which the school is offering the dissenting students is important to them, there is a basis for cooperation. If, on the other hand, the students are attending against their will, it is unlikely that they will negotiate in good faith.

If the student dissenters and the principal agree to meet to discuss the issues, they first ought to agree that negotiations—probably leading to a compromise—are an acceptable means of proceeding. Thereafter, standard steps in the process are these (the conflicting parties can attain them by themselves or with the help of a mediator):

1. Point out goals which are common to each party in the dispute.
2. Get each side to agree to basic standards and styles in the negotiation process—open communication, mutual respect, persuasion instead of coercion.
3. Reduce tension by finding areas of agreement and dispelling feelings of threat and defensiveness; reduce polarized thinking.
4. Help everyone seek solutions in which *each side* can realize some net gain.
5. Seek a variety of alternative solutions.⁴

A mediator has several advantages in doing these things: he is experienced and he is less pressed emotionally; consequently he can think more clearly and productively. When he points out favorable aspects of a proposal, the representatives of the opposing side will consider his observation at face value. Sometimes a mediator will be able to reduce antagonism between the adversaries so that each can gracefully accept a compromise.

It takes time to apply this process and to reconcile differences.

A school board member who was a participant in long negotiations with students in one of the Norwalk, Connecticut high schools describes it: "For weeks the meetings proceeded in an atmosphere which seemed chaotic, combative, and sometimes ominous. . . . Eventually I could detect some emerging pattern, some acceptance of boundaries within which all parties could operate. . . . The students first arrived with noisy accusations; the next time they presented us with a list of demands. After a while they began coming with a mimeographed agenda for discussion. Ground rules were gradually established: no personal complaints, no recriminations against individual students by our side, and no public accusations by theirs against individual teachers."⁵

There is an important and basic concept which distinguishes various kinds of conflict situations. If it is understood, the adversaries may find that they have much less reason to take strong opposing stances than they formerly believed. The distinction is between two basic conflict situations: *distributive* and *integrative*.

Distributive conflict situations are usually vivid and the conflict is intense. They are characterized by a limited and finite number of rewards. Two people bidding for a certain antique chest at an auction is an example of distributive conflict because there is only *one* such chest. If one person wins, the other loses. Similarly, in a war for control of a certain territory, what one side wins the other loses. Certain games where there are just so many points as a total possible score or so much cash in the kitty are further examples. In such *distributive* situations conflict tends to be cut-throat and such tactics as bluff, withholding information, and deception are often purposeful.

In contrast, integrative conflict situations are those in which the possible rewards are not closely limited; if each team or party to conflict competes intelligently *each* will win more. One example of this is two competing investment clubs. If they operate wisely each may profit 15 percent rather than 5 because one group's success is not dependent upon the other group's failure. Two university professors writing books on allied topics may be competing in a way for prestige; yet they can both be published, and the quality and acclaim that each book attains is unrestricted. Each author can win without detracting from the other.

In these *integrative* conflict situations adaptive tactics are quite different from situations with finite rewards. Effective tactics include free and forthright communication, honesty rather than deception, free sharing of information, and reduction of whatever hostility may exist between the two parties.

It is important that school officials recognize that many high school problems are clearly *integrative* conflict. Whether to recognize Malcolm X's birthday, for example, is not a win-lose situation. A black student union can win on this issue without having anyone lose. Student pressures to exert influence upon curriculum are similar. The creation of a student council curriculum committee takes nothing away from those in power. Indeed, the total pool of ideas is likely to be greater. Widespread conflict over failure of a black girl to make the cheerleading squad can be resolved by increasing its membership, thereby changing this from a distributive to an integrative situation.

One of the first things to do when conflict arises is to see which of these two classifications applies. If the problem is one where the rewards are not limited in number, the values of collaboration should be pointed out to the two parties. If the problem arises as a win-lose situation, those with authority and insight ought to apply some ingenuity to seek to change the stakes so it becomes integrative in nature.

Sometimes events reach a point where the only way to restore order and safety to a high school is for those in charge to act promptly, authoritatively, and with force. This does not mean calling the riot squad. There are many kinds and degrees of forceful response to conflict besides the actions often denoted by the phrase "law and order."

The first step in forceful combat is a show of strength. Power is shown in a way that makes it clear to the adversary that it will be to his advantage to cooperate, and that he can only lose by persisting in behavior that will cause a showdown. This is standard strategy in a variety of situations ranging from a western movie gun battle, international cold war, and—now—schools.

The emergency plan of one Michigan Board of Education reflects this common and humane pre-combat tactic. It advises principals to "first, order the disruptive students to cease their

offensive activity. Be clear and specific in giving them directions. If they do not cooperate, say, 'If you do not immediately do as I have asked, you will force me to suspend you from school for breaking school rules and for disobeying my orders.' If students continue to act in defiance of the principal, he must say, 'I suspend you from school. You must leave the premises and go home immediately. If you do not immediately and peacefully leave, *I shall have the police remove you from the building.*'"

Most well-organized city high schools have emergency plans. These outline specific procedures for deploying the school's own staff for maximum effectiveness in gaining control and restoring normal order. The advantages of accomplishing this through the work of school personnel rather than police are clear: students are less likely to over-react, and there will be less unwarranted and damaging talk in the community. Many people feel that calling the police is like pushing the panic button.

The principal of an Illinois high school which had repeated disturbances reported that in the third instance of trouble, "we had teachers on hall supervision to make sure that the students whom we had suspended *left* the building. We had no police on hand. One of the things that I learned from the previous trouble was that police don't help a darned bit until you actually have a problem. They just antagonize people prior to that time."

A peace officer in a California high school expressed this opinion: "Calling in uniformed officers is a last ditch operation. When there is no other out and you have tried everything, then you call them. Then they will take over, more or less, because they are there to keep the peace, and they will keep it in whatever manner they consider best."

This is not to say that police should not be called in. If disorder has reached the point where the school authorities have lost control, and there is a risk of students being injured, police should be called. If weapons are being displayed, police force is necessary.

When the principal calls the police in an emergency he is saying, in effect: "Events have reached the point where I am unable to control the school. I need your help; I am asking you to get control and to restore order before you return the school to my control." There is an implicit transfer of authority to the chief of

police or whoever else is in charge. The principal—and those above him in the school administration—should understand that authority now rests with the police chief, not with the principal.

The principal, superintendent, and police officials ought to meet well in advance of any trouble and discuss the possibilities of disorder, the point at which to call the police, and what training and attitudes the police officers are likely to bring to bear upon the situation. Some police forces have excellent training in coping with group disorders.

In schools with a significant number of black students, the police who are summoned should be racially mixed. Black people in the United States have some negative opinions about the police. Many of them see police as oppressors, or feel that the police are indifferent to the protection of black people while ready to react strongly in defense of whites. Such resentment is reflected by these comments by a black student: "We are really at a disadvantage because any time a fight did break out they would always grab a Negro guy and hit him with a stick. Any time more than five or six Negro boys walked together the police would spray them with mace. That is what really made the black students mad, and every opportunity we had we tried to just tear this place down. They would hit you with their stick and that kind of stuff; mostly they would jump on the girls and we don't like nobody to jump on our girls, black girls, because we don't mess with nobody else's girls!"

If there is increasing disorder and imminent violence, another alternative is to close school. This tactic may be suitable either as an *alternative* to calling the police or as a *sequel*. Though the police have done their work and stopped the fighting on a specific day, the explosive tensions that remain may warrant closing.

There is no "rule of thumb" on this. One opinion is: "Never close school unless there is doubt about the students' safety. Once you close school you have capitulated; you have done exactly what your adversaries wanted and you're licked. It's like a bomb scare; the principal who is foolish enough to send students home is going to have a lot of bomb scares in his school. Same thing with closing a school in response to fighting."

A different, more specific purpose for closing a school is expressed

by the principal of a 3500-student high school in Illinois. "We closed the school and then I directed the teachers to search all the lockers in the school. We got knives and forks and bicycle chains and pieces of pipe and pieces of wood and homemade blackjacks out of kids' lockers—kids that had never been in a fight with anybody. By and large they were the college prep white kids, and what they had done was to put this stuff in their lockers as a protective measure. We suspended 40 or 50 kids because of this type of thing. But when we reopened the school two days later there were relieved looks on the faces of kids because they had the feeling that we had removed everything from lockers and everyone was going to try to get along together."

Once the crisis is past, regardless of the means of its resolution, the business of disciplining the disruptive students remains.

A clinical view of extreme student revolutionaries is stated by Dr. Bruno Bettelheim, a psychologist and educator, who testified before a congressional committee that some of these leaders were, "outright paranoid individuals, dangerous because of their high intelligence. I know that student revolt permits them to act out their paranoia to a degree that no other position in society would permit them."⁶

In such extreme cases as this—and probably many others—the school's main effort should be to diagnose and to rehabilitate. It should be a regular part of the discipline procedures to have a clinical investigation, to determine whether some supplementary school services can aid the student in making an acceptable adjustment to school.

However, the young person who assaults others with weapons, injures classmates, and attempts arson requires something besides clinical treatment. The school must demonstrate clearly that such behavior cannot occur with impunity.

In approaching the subject of punishment, educators must heed the principles of law if they are to avoid the humiliation of having their disciplinary procedures reversed by higher authorities.

The concept of *due process of law* is essential to the rights of citizens in American democracy. Speaking of due process and other civil rights, Mr. Justice Abraham Fortas wrote: "It can

hardly be argued that either students or teachers shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the school-house gate."⁷ The right of due process of law belongs to students, and it has clear implications for the administration of discipline.

The concept of "reasonableness" is prime in the court decisions on school discipline cases; therefore, the imposition of a moderate punishment of those whose guilt has been clearly established is the wisest course.

Expulsion from school is a serious matter, terminating a student's education in the high school perhaps for the balance of the year, perhaps for all time. The principal may only *recommend* to the board of education that a student be expelled, in most states. Since the board usually will provide for a hearing in which parents, legal counsel, and others may speak in behalf of the student, the wise principal will arrange an informal hearing for the student and his parents in his own office. The results of this should be considered before deciding whether to recommend expulsion.

Before ending this consideration of responses to conflict, the reader is again reminded that the several approaches have not been presented in order of importance or preference. This is too complex a topic to be thought of in linear terms. Each situation must be appraised on its own merits. Careful thought—probably by more than one person—should result in a deliberate judgment as to what procedures will be best to secure the school as a good environment for learning for all the students involved.

Chapter 5

CONSTRUCTIVE STUDENT POWER

To discuss the question of whether high school students should have power is an idle exercise. They do have it. This has been demonstrated again and again. The problem is that the power is being wielded by groups which are considered illegitimate and striving for goals which seem to be counter to those of the school establishment.

Most people will concede, after venting their indignation about the effrontery of modern youth, that "it is really only a few; most of the kids are O.K." That leaves these problems: How can so few cause so much chaos and consternation? Why are these few working against the good and wise school officials? Isn't there any positive student action in the schools? What is the matter with the less active majority?

These questions are the material of this chapter.

Power is based in groups. An individual cannot greatly alter an institution. But groups can effect change in a number of ways ranging from boycotts and sit-ins to mass lateness and other subtle means of sabotage.

Teachers and principals have been amazingly naive about the sociological structure of their schools. Asked to describe the mass of students, they reply: "I think they're mostly happy here; of course, there's a small group of malcontents." Or they say: "Well, there are the college-bound kids and the others"; or "I don't think we really have *any* groups here, except maybe the student council."

Of course there are groups in school. They include, for example, the athletes, the hippies, the black militants, the climbers, the moderate blacks, the surfers, the greasers, the Latinos, the "Golden Guineas" and many others, depending upon the school and its composition.

Conversations with students in high schools show that they recognize that these informal groups are effective in controlling their members even if the adults in school fail to perceive this.

The existence of such groups must and will be recognized in this discussion of constructive student power.

The student council is the "clean" group that teachers will readily recognize, perhaps because it is clearly labelled, innocuous and compliant. Here is what students think about it:

It's a climber organization—for the kids who are 'making it.' A lot of kids think it is a farce, all the way around. . . . It doesn't really do anything.

For four years the Student Council of our school has been nothing but a social club. It consisted of the elite kids of the school.

It seems to me that Student Council is a big game we play at school. It's supposed to be a representative body of students, but it's really more of a popularity contest. If they make a decision and the administration or the faculty don't like it, it's immediately thrown out. . . . Council is nothing but a puppet for the administration.

Confidence in any action group is generated by that group's record of effective accomplishments. In most schools, students' dim view of the student council comes from the fact that it has done little—at least little that students consider important.

Three reforms are needed to make most student councils more meaningful bodies: more comprehensive representation, jurisdiction over some affairs of importance, and a provision for training leaders.

To begin with the matter of representation, it is an unfortunate fact that most student councils are composed mainly of conforming, middle class students. The malcontents are not there; neither are the poor students, nor a proportional number of minority group students. Sometimes these students are disqualified by academic standards. Often they refrain from seeking office because of their feelings of insecurity and apprehension at mingling with the "mainstream" young people in what is essentially a *verbal* undertaking. Some of these students may be prevented from participating by conflicts between after-school job obligations and student council committee work.

The absence of a major segment of the students limits a council's effectiveness. A whole realm of problems in the school probably will not appear on the agenda because the students who are troubled by them are not in a position to press their concerns—problems like the high cost of participating in school activities, the lack of technical courses for students not going to college, or unsatisfactory school transportation to the poor part of town across the river.

There are available remedies. A student council will reflect the social make-up of the school better if homeroom elections are dropped and students are elected from an academic class—preferably a subject which everyone studies like English or social studies. In most large schools, ability grouping is practiced, so that some English classes are composed of students with high aptitude and high academic goals, and at the other end of the scale are those students who are sub-standard readers. These classes usually reflect the social stratification of the school. If student council elections occur in each English class, one may be assured of the elec-

tion of a number of students of the minority ethnic group, and students who are not completely aligned with the status quo in school.

Recognizing the need for a diversity of opinion on student council and for representation of the dissatisfied and perhaps alienated segment of the student body, Allan Glatthorn, principal of Abington High School in Pennsylvania, suggests the appointment of some "members-at-large." "In some council constitutions," he writes, "provisions are made for the principal to have the right to appoint from two to six members-at-large from the student body. In other councils, the faculty nominates a slate of members-at-large, from which the student body makes its selection. In both cases, the objective is the same: to include on the council those students who are badly needed but who would otherwise not be selected."¹

The ultimate in responsiveness to the will of the students is the western school which holds that any student who can present a petition with 25 names of students who want him to represent them, is *in*. It is interesting to imagine how the adoption of that practice would change the membership of student councils in many high schools which presently elect through homeroom and have academic and citizenship qualifications.

Jurisdiction is a major problem of most councils. Some student councils do nothing of greater significance than plan the details of school dances and operate machinery for next year's elections. In most schools the student council members know that they are restricted to tinkering with a few extra-curricular matters, and that even those decisions are subject to the approval of the principal. In contrast, the student government in the high school of Palm Springs, California has committees on campus issues, finances, student discipline, activities, communications, and curriculum.

Where students are in a position to collaborate with the school staff in substantive matters like curriculum, for example, more ideas will be generated. The student body will raise issues of concern through orderly channels, and the vigorous interaction of viewpoints will bring about a more vital educational program which is in tune with the needs of students.

There are two predictable objections to giving students influence on important topics. These should be noted and answered. Some adults will object that students have no business being concerned with curriculum. They argue that they have nothing to contribute to this professional topic and their voices would only confuse things. In rebuttal, let it be noted that schools are run for the benefit of students. Their interest in what is being taught them may not be the decisive factor in what is being offered, but it should be considered. The danger of confusion is much less from a student council curriculum committee profering suggestions than from spontaneous, *ad hoc* student groups storming board of education meetings, thereby causing repercussions through the administrative hierarchy.

The other objection is that asking teachers to surrender their authority to adolescents is unthinkable and wrong. But this is not the proposal. Those who advocate that students have some voice in serious school affairs are not trying to silence teachers. The aim is to get students and teachers to *cooperate* in running the school.

If student council is to grow to constructive student power, it must have strong leadership. A sixteen or seventeen-year-old will not come to office as a ready-made, effective student council officer; the school has a responsibility to educate him for the responsibilities of office. There are a number of ways of doing this. One plan is to provide a week's retreat during a school vacation when the officers and advisor go to a camp or conference center for seminars, reading, films, and case studies of student council problems. A school in California enrolls the student council officers in a minor course entitled "Leadership Training" which meets two or three times a week. This course helps the elected students gain skills in human relations, management, communication, and other phases of leadership.

Schools can help new officers gain in stature by providing a reasonable period of overlap during which the old officers are available to brief the new ones on their duties. Many schools have student council elections in April so that for six weeks the newcomers can serve in tandem with the outgoing officers. The school

which has the most outstanding student council I have observed—New Trier High School in Winnetka, Illinois—has the election at mid-year, so that the new officers can benefit from the advice of the former leaders for a full semester. Carrying this one step further, one might have only juniors serve in the top offices of council so that the senior former officers can assist on an “emeritus” basis or as committee heads with executive committee status.

The student council advisor has an important part in the job of leadership training. This teacher should be interested in the dynamics of organizations, personally secure, and confident in the ability of students to grow to the dimensions of tasks before them. With the aid of such an advisor, students may be led to devote adequate time to studying a problem before making a premature, ill-informed decision. If a principal believes this is not happening, he should exert his influence to cause the student council to adopt tactics leading to better decisions, rather than clip its wings.

With the foregoing reforms—better representation, broader jurisdiction, and leadership training—and with a sponsor who has group development skills and enough courage to stand up for the students when they take a strong position, the record of accomplishments will take care of itself. This kind of student council will undertake substantial projects like obtaining the long-needed late activities bus, having a film course offered on a trial basis, or getting a fuller program of physical activities for girls.

Does black power belong in this discussion of constructive student power? In many schools this has become an issue as students have pressed the principal to allow the formation of a Black Student Union.

The drive to form such clubs reflects the recent surge of positive race consciousness which has swept through black people in the United States. The school which recognizes and accepts the racial pride of its black students enables this force to operate in beneficial ways.

In some schools, B.S.U. upperclassmen work to help “the brothers and sisters” in the incoming class get off to a good start in September by assigning personal sponsors to each one, by urging serious study, and by directing them to tutoring programs where

the need arises. B.S.U.'s have raised money for scholarships. They have sought to raise the goals of students by bringing to school successful black businessmen and political leaders as speakers in meetings and assemblies.

The principal of one urban high school told of the B.S.U.'s help in defending the school from intrusion by troublemakers: "Our B.S.U. leadership has helped us tremendously with minor crises which could have developed into something bigger. They have told outsiders from other schools, 'This is our campus; get the hell off it; we don't want any trouble. If you want to mess up your own school, go ahead, but don't come over here and mess up ours!'"

Much of the value of a B.S.U. may be to enable some of its members to grow to fuller stature as persons, and to feel that they do have something of their own in the school. A B.S.U. sponsor in a California school, when interviewed, said: "I think this organization is the penicillin shot that a black person needs to feel some individual identity so that he will feel strong enough to go out and participate in other things."

A B.S.U. member said: "It's perfect, you know, to have something of our own where we can meet and talk over our problems among ourselves and just be together."

These positive qualities of B.S.U.'s may, in some schools, be offset by leaders who misuse their positions for their own ego-gratification, with the result that separatism overshadows the announced goals of racial pride and help. A student or adult leader who has unmet personal needs* may abuse the opportunities which the leadership post presents, by reaching for a "messiah" role, bidding strongly for popularity by launching programs with more dramatic appeal than substance. All demagogues know that it is easier to rally followers in a crusade *against* something than *for* a cause. This may explain the ill-starred experience with B.S.U.'s in some high schools.

*Insights into the emotionally crippling experiences which are all too common in the lives of black people in American society are presented in *Black Rage* by two psychiatrists, Price M. Cobbs and William H. Grier, Basic Books Inc. (New York: 1968.)

The principal who would help an organization designed primarily to benefit black students should heed the following cautions: Listen carefully to what the proponents of the new organization say; understand them and obtain a written statement of goals, objectives and proposed membership policy. Interpret the organization carefully (though perhaps through informal means) to the rest of the school and community. Be certain that, like other clubs, it is duly chartered by the student council and sanctioned by the superintendent of schools.

One of the most vexing issues in the proposed B.S.U. will be whether white students may affiliate with it. Leaders of such a club in a California school answer this question, saying: "There is no reason for whites to come to the meeting, because in our statement of purpose it is all spelled out 'black students this and black students that.' They've got the message. Of course, according to the constitution, members of any race could join, but at the time, the message got across that it wouldn't be particularly suitable for whites to join, so they didn't."

The principal of a midwestern high school describes his resolution of this issue: "I indicated that the constitution must provide for open membership because this was a board of education policy which I could not change. They said, 'Does this mean that whites have to belong to our club?' I replied, 'No, it does not mean that whites have to belong, but it does mean they have the same opportunity to join as in the case of any other club in school.' This didn't seem to be a hang-up because they doubted if any whites would want to join, anyway."

There is no doubt that a B.S.U. can be a sensitive issue. If formed carefully, it can survive the inevitable growing pains.

A school should respond to the needs of *all* minority students who tend to be apart from the mainstream of the school. The B.S.U. has been used as an example of an ethnic club because black students are the most numerous minority in our high schools. In Texas or in other southwestern states, bids to form a chapter of M.A.Y.A. (Mexican American Youth Association) should be just as carefully considered. In some California schools now O.S.U.'s (Oriental Student Unions) are flourishing.

Less dramatic but more numerous are the average, middle-of-the-road students. When things go wrong in school they grumble. Often the trouble comes from less than 5 percent of the students. Why are the other 95 percent ineffective and impotent?

The most useful way to answer this question is to note that sometimes—though rarely—the moderates have counted for something. One such case history follows.

“Dr. Fish, I’m worried about Montclair High School,” said Tim, a sandy-haired, seventeen-year-old senior. “I don’t like this atmosphere of tension coming from the extreme black students who are bent upon the idea of separatism, and extreme white students talking about organizing against them. No good is going to come from all this. You know 85 or 90 percent of the students of this school are like me—pretty non-sensational, moderate, middle-of-the-road people. I want to get an education, and I want to have my diploma from M.H.S. continue to mean something. I don’t want to see the school pulled apart and broken down by a lot of stupid fighting. What I’d like to get going is sort of a movement of *militant moderates!*”

In the weeks following this conversation, the moderate students did, indeed, become active and influential. I responded to the initiative of Tim and two or three like-minded students, inviting them to spend an evening at my home developing their ideas. The date was set about 10 days in the future.

In the meantime, a storm was gathering at school. Controversy surrounding the question of whether the B.S.U. could be racially exclusive culminated in a 400-student sit-in in the school’s amphitheater. Disorder erupted in the cafeteria. Senseless black-white fights occurred. Almost daily one or two students came and asked me if there wasn’t some way that concerned students could help the school. I invited each of these students to come and participate in the evening meeting soon to be held in my home. The result was that sixteen or eighteen concerned students—of both races—sat around my living room floor that evening and worked to develop a plan to stabilize their troubled and potentially disintegrating high school.

There were three fortunate characteristics of the student work

group: both races were well-represented, there was capable leadership among the students, and they practiced good group dynamics. They framed statements and suggestions thoughtfully, and they listened to one another attentively, showing respect for contributions made. This was due in part to training they had received.

During the summer the school had provided, with Ford Foundation sponsorship, a workshop on conflict resolution. The University of Michigan, which implemented the Ford grant in several high schools, appointed Mr. Fred Hill, a group dynamics consultant, to help Montclair High. The workshop which he conducted focused on inter-generational and interracial conflict. The method consisted, in large measure, of sessions in which students, teachers, and parents practiced group dynamics and sensitivity training. These were conducted with the aid of well-qualified trainers.

The eighteen students gathered in my living room analyzed the problem and began considering solutions. There was no adult domination. Acting as an observer, I occasionally presented bits of "feed-back" concerning the processes which were occurring and sometimes asked a question.

Two hours later, amidst empty coke bottles and pretzel dishes, ideas were forming. The group had agreed that assemblies, presented to each class of about 600 students, would be the most effective means of communicating their message. Each assembly would consist of a student panel making a half hour presentation. Each panel would include boys and girls, black and white. Regardless of each panelist's club, team, or class affiliation, he was to make it clear that he was speaking, not as president, captain, or representative of anything, but as a *responsible individual*. Because of differences in experience and background, the individuals on each panel would bring out different points of emphasis while reinforcing this same essential theme. The group agreed that some, not all, of those present at the evening planning session were "naturals" for the assembly presentations. It was easy for the students to identify others in the school who ought to be invited to broaden the membership on the panels and to provide a balanced message.

On the following day, school was dismissed early to avoid the possibility of violence during the lunch period; during the free afternoon, the students continued the assembly planning, this time with the additional resource of Fred Hill, our workshop consultant.

The next day, Friday, the four assemblies occurred as planned. No adult was on stage. The programs were entirely student-planned and student-run. By pre-arrangement, there was no question-and-answer period; the presentations were to be complete within themselves. "Let's say what we have to say, dismiss, and let them think about it over the weekend," said an attractive sophomore girl.

The boys and girls who were on stage at these assemblies spoke with impact and presented messages that were thoughtful, urgent, and moving. The assemblies had their intended effect. The student body attended school the following Monday in a new, sobered spirit, impressed that it was really up to each of them to act responsibly and to preserve their high school. A new stability and sense of relief promptly settled on Montclair High School, largely as a result of the work of the "militant moderates" who were encouraged in their desire to become a power for a purpose in their school.

To summarize and fuse the main ideas which have been presented on constructive student power, attention is again called to the importance of social groups. One cannot deal with 1500 or 2500 students as individuals, in relation to setting policy or programs on social issues. Neither can the students, as individuals, exert much influence. Groups are important. When informal groups exist, they should be recognized. If a large number of students with positive social values have no cohesiveness, groups should be formed to channel their energies related to the social issues which are present. The next task is to develop a means of communicating with the leaders of the groups and articulating their diverse points of view in a harmonious fashion.

Berkeley High School in California (which is a much more peaceful place than the nearby University campus) responds to this task in an effective way. Instead of having a conventional student council, a Board of Control governs student affairs. This

is a "coalition government" in which each major school activity is represented: the Varsity Club, the National Honor Society, Senior Friends, the Black Student Union, and some representatives-at-large. This Board of Control (about 25 students) is responsive to a broad spectrum of students, for each member is there representing a particular constituency. When the Board of Control representative for a particular group participates at meetings, he does so with greater authority and responsibility than if he simply represented Homeroom 110.

More important than the specific organizational scheme is the philosophy. If student power is to be unleashed as a positive force in schools, with the leadership of the principal, all groups of students must have a part in shaping the course of events. They must work with teachers, for both groups are a legitimate part of the school. Collaboration, however, is not the same as subservience.

Chapter 6

TEACHER POWER

“Perhaps the most elusive, but at the same time the most consequential factor,” wrote a team who studied a large, conflict-torn high school in a New Jersey city, “is the teachers’ prayerful hope that *the administration* can somehow repress discontent so that in a business-as-usual fashion routines can be followed, the devils exorcised, and the teacher can be spared the painful and awesome responsibility of working with the administration, his teaching peers, the students, and the concerned community in clarifying the basic issues and moving toward their resolution.”¹

In the country schools of yesteryear there was no question about the teacher’s responsibility or power. He taught, visited parents, and dealt directly with any insurrections or other problems among

the students. The teacher's job was comprehensive and his involvement complete.

In today's large, specialized, and fragmented high schools the influence of the teacher is much diminished. But it is worth regaining.

Earlier discussions of power in this book have contended that power is based in groups. If a school is an arena where power is tested and established, either by active or verbal means, the faculty is a group which should make its weight felt. Teachers have a stake in the school; that is obvious. They also have valuable intellectual resources to contribute. Yet in many cases of conflict in high schools, the teachers, as a group, have been insignificant and too few; as individuals, have played roles of importance. Are teachers not interested in exerting any power or influence over the social problems in schools?

A research project conducted by the University of Michigan investigated teachers' perceptions of the allocation of power in their schools. It showed that they were not satisfied. Three hundred teachers were asked to rate on a five-point scale the amount of power that various kinds of school employees had in influencing key school decisions. After rating the amount of power that the principal of their school actually had, they were asked how much power they felt he *should* have. The respondents were asked to make similar pairs of ratings for the board of education, the superintendent, teachers, parents, and students. The discrepancies between *actual* power as perceived by teachers and *ideal* power were then noted. The study showed that teachers generally felt that superintendents had about the right amount of power. In some schools they felt that the principal had the right amount of power; in others they felt he did not have enough. Responses concerning students and parents varied. But the consistent finding in all schools was that *the teachers believed that they had less power or influence than they should have* in determining educational matters in their schools.²

The same teachers were asked to make estimates about the attitudes and concerns of their fellow faculty members on a number of issues. Among the items rated of highest concern were: "Desire

to make changes in the school"; "Concern about the relevance of the curriculum for the future of their students"; and "Interest in participating on faculty or school committees."³

Evidently teachers have something in common with dissenting students in their desire for more relevant curriculum and for participatory democracy in schools. Then what is restraining them from the accomplishment of these goals, and what could help teachers attain a reasonable amount of power?

The historic center of power in the American high school is the principal. If the influence of others in the school is restricted, it is because he has been unwilling to relinquish the power that historically has been his. Many schools have operated effectively for years under the tight rein of the principal. If this leader is wise and has high integrity, and if subordinates are content to act the conventional role of compliant teachers doing their work without question, a highly efficient school may result. People are specialized and can devote their full attention to teaching or to learning. However, this arrangement offers little opportunity for either students or teachers to learn or grow outside their areas of specialization, and it distinctly limits the input of creative ideas about improvement of the school. John Gardner writes that continual institutional renewal is essential for institutional well-being, and that organizations which lack an infusion of new ideas inevitably decline.⁴

In most American communities, moreover, social forces have shaped attitudes in students and teachers so that an autocratic high school *just won't work*. Said one California teacher: "I sympathize with teachers who resent policies being dictated by administrators. Most of the teachers I have known in my ten years of teaching leave the university fired up to do a job and to try all kinds of innovations to implement their ideals, and I think that most of us have had similar experiences of having our ideas overlooked or laughed at. Or, what is worse, we have put a lot of time on a project, and somebody in an administrative position is completely indifferent to it. Later, when the principal comes along in an emergency and says, 'We have to do something right away!' there is a tendency to shrug the shoulders and say, 'Well, go

ahead and do it; you are the guy that is getting paid for it! I think the teacher's experience is kind of demoralizing."

The most conspicuous takeover of power by teachers has been the recent growth of teacher unions, and the related shift to union tactics by teachers' associations. This has resulted in higher salaries and in other important changes which, though less publicized, are factors for better education. One such improvement is the lightening of class load; teachers in many communities have guarantees that there will be no more than thirty students in a class. Another gain is the contract stipulation that teachers need not work at menial jobs like cafeteria monitor.

Unfortunately, the acquisition of power through unions too often decreases cooperation between teachers and principal. The class warfare stance that unions sometimes promote between teachers and principals is shown by two provisions that a Michigan teachers' organization tried to insert in their contract. "If an unfair labor practice charge is filed against a school administrator and he is judged guilty, he must be dismissed from his position no later than the end of the school year." The other provision was that: "If 51 percent of the faculty signs a petition objecting to a school principal, he cannot be re-employed in his present post the next school year."

Teacher power is needed, but not as a self-seeking force. The need is for teachers to become a group which exerts its power to shape a positive school program in collaboration with the principal and other professionals. The plan presented here for accomplishing this is the formation of a faculty council.

A faculty council must be distinguished from two other structures. One of these is the principal's cabinet. The principal's cabinet usually consists of his immediate assistants, deans, and the director of guidance. This is a useful group in coping with problems which the administrative head of the high school faces. Another group found in most high schools is the department heads' council, sometimes called an advisory council. This group may consider curriculum and related matters such as the timing for course changes, student registration for the coming year, or how to adjust to a budget cut which will affect teaching supplies.

But neither of these groups satisfy the need for *teacher participation* in the decision-making of the school.

The group of department chairmen does not really satisfy this goal, for most teachers see the department chairmen as being one echelon removed from them. Department chairmen are not on a par with classroom teachers because they teach less than full-time in most schools, and they have quasi-administrative responsibilities. They are seen as an arm of the administration because they have responsibilities for supervision and evaluation. For this reason, the sharing of decision-making with department chairmen does not really give teachers a proper amount of influence in their school.

A faculty council is different. It is a group of classroom teachers, freely elected on a representative basis, which meets to exert real influence in shaping significant decisions for the school. Charles Brodsky, a Newark High School principal, presents valuable information on the formation of faculty councils in an area published in the *Bulletin of the National Association of Secondary Principals*.⁵ Brodsky presents the following as the requisites of an effective faculty council:

1. A majority of the council should be elected by the faculty (there may be some administrative members).
2. The council has jurisdiction over any administrative problem affecting students or staff.
3. Meetings occur at least once a month, beginning the last period of the school day.
4. Principal agrees to accept the council's recommendation and to put it into effect, with only two exceptions: if illegal, or if it were "anathema" to the principal so that he could not, in conscience, live with it.

It is clear that teachers should comprise a majority of the faculty council if it is to fulfill its purpose of providing a channel for teacher participation in the conduct of the school. In Mr. Brodsky's school, the principal, by his own choice, did not vote. In other schools, the faculty council includes only one administra-

tive member, the principal; in some schools only classroom teachers are members. The latter arrangement has some disadvantages: it would increase the possibility of overlooking important legal, fiscal, or community relations considerations with resultant poor decisions. These decisions would then be criticized by the principal with consequent additional discussion and frustration.

It is true that most teachers have less professional training than the principal. But this does not mean that the faculty council is a force for poor decisions. If the principal is a participating member of the group—whether he votes or not—his knowledge and professional background will be added to the sum total of the intelligence and training represented in the group. This will work out in actuality if good group dynamics are at work so that members do not feel defensive and competitive, but rather, each person's psychological needs are satisfied during the work of the group and everyone makes his maximum contribution. One teacher-principal difference which has been established by research⁵ is that teachers depend upon rules to control the behavior of students more than do principals. This indicates that if the faculty council makes decisions on its own, without the influence of the principal, a more rule-centered, authoritarian school atmosphere may result. From this it follows, again, that the principal should be a participant in the faculty council and should contribute freely, citing all the evidence that he can in support of his beliefs and preferences.

If a school's faculty council consists largely of teachers of mediocre intelligence or with personal problems which militate against good group work, if the urgency of the school problems is so great that only a "martial law" approach is practical, or if the extended time periods for full discussion of issues cannot be arranged, then the principal may be well advised to restrict the role of such a group to recommendations. It would be unusual, however, to have any of these except the time problem prevail.

Election to faculty councils differs from school to school. In some schools, election is by floor or by building wing, based upon the belief that the members work as representatives of other teachers who work close to their classrooms. Sometimes election

is by department, where teachers using some of the same facilities can easily be in communication with their representative on the council, although this risks being seen as a junior department chairmen's group. A case may be made for the "at-large" election of representatives at a general faculty meeting. If first, second, and third choices were weighted in electing a council of twelve members, the different shades of philosophy of the faculty might be represented among the council group.

One of Mr. Brodsky's highly practical suggestions is that meetings of the council begin during the last period of the day. Meeting on school time partly removes the "extra duty" onus of service on the council. The last period designation makes it possible to extend the meeting time as circumstances dictate. One of the greatest hindrances to effective discussion and decision making in schools is the 45-minute period. How often do meetings begin a few minutes late ("because I had to clean up after a lab period up on the third floor"), warm to discussion of the topic, approach the point of decision, and then have to be cut off because a bell rings, indicating that "my fourth period English class is up there waiting for me, and that's *some class*—I'll have to go!" It is extremely important to set the meeting time of any significant school decision-making group so that there can be sufficient time to work.

The most significant aspect of Mr. Brodsky's faculty council has doubtless had its impact upon the reader already. "This faculty council is unique in one important way," writes Brodsky, "and therein lies the key to its success. The principal *agrees to accept the recommendations of the council and to put them into effect even if he does not fully agree with them.*"⁶ Only two exceptions to this are noted: the question of legality and instances where the principal has strong "conscientious objections" on the grounds that he simply could not live with a recommendation. A significant testimony to the working relationship and to the quality of the decisions is that in the case cited, the principal never had been forced to reject the council's recommendations.

The principal who establishes this framework for a faculty council demonstrates courage, for he takes risks in sharing power. He risks encounters with colleagues in discussion where he may be in

the minority and where his own judgment will be challenged. He risks having to live with decisions about which he has mixed feelings; though his reservations may not be strong enough to reject a recommendation, he may be less than enthusiastic about it. Since the principal, as responsible head of the school, is accountable for all decisions, does he risk his reputation by taking the responsibility for decisions made by people with less competence than his own? This depends upon a basic assumption.

A teacher in a California school sums up one of the assumptions undergirding the formation of a faculty council when he says:

A democracy will work if there is a will to make it work and a belief that what you are setting up is what you intend to work with. Whenever I find a majority of human beings disagreeing with me on a value judgment, my guess is I'm wrong. If I didn't think this way, I'd end up being kind of screwy. In other words, no principal should form a faculty council unless he is willing to say that its majority view of value judgments has as much chance of being right as his own. I am not talking about the particulars of subject matter, or about professional data on the art of teaching. But on value judgments that involve the overall operation of the school, *if I were principal I would be awfully cautious about disagreeing with a strong majority of my faculty senate who have been chosen by election from the faculty. The odds are that they've got something there.*

How to institute a faculty council is another question. Change is difficult. Groups of people have a great deal of inertia. If the weeks and months of the school year run into one another uneventfully, it will be hard to interest teachers in making the effort to form a new organization. One may have to wait until the time is right.

The right time to form a faculty council may be during an unforeseen disturbance in the institutional life of the school. Crises have some positive features, and the perceptive principal may use an instance of student unrest or school disruption as a

catalyst in generating teacher power to balance the burgeoning student power. Other events which may be used as leverage to launch a faculty council may be an unpopular decision by a higher level of administration in the school system or a public attack upon the school.

What about the relationship between the teachers' union and a faculty council? In many localities, the teachers' union is thought of as being anti-administration and concerned mainly with gaining higher salaries, fringe benefits, and better working conditions for its members. This is not always the case, nor should it be presumed to be unless there is specific evidence to support this view. If a teachers' union or a strong, assertive education association exists in a school system, the principal ought to seek productive and peaceful coexistence through collaborative work. If he takes the initiative in developing a cooperative relationship, he will usually find members of the teachers' group responsive. An illustration of this is seen in this statement by a union teacher in a midwestern school: "Let's face it; there were administrative errors made in dealing with our dissident students, but the union was involved in some of the decisions. The building principals, the superintendent and his assistants, three union representatives and the union chairman sat together and formulated the basic policies. We did not criticize any of these administrative errors because we were in it together. Our principal has many strengths; he surrounded himself with people he had faith in and he asked their advice. He wouldn't say, 'this is the way it's going to be.' Instead, he'd call staff members in and say, 'We think we might like to do it this way; what are the problems if we do or what are any other possible ways to do it?'"

If a strong teachers' organization exists in the school, this should be considered in organizing a faculty council. Because of its work on salaries, the union or teachers' association will be seen by faculty members as the *real* expression of teacher power. If the faculty council is entirely separate from the union or is seen as a competing group, it will have little prestige or power. In one high school, teachers bypassed the faculty council and went to their union representative, who was the head negotiator for salaries,

about every imaginable idea or complaint because of his "visibility" related to teachers' association activities. But the possibility of union representation in the faculty council should be considered and worked out in whatever way responds best to the realities of a given school and community.

The discussion of teacher power, up to this point, has dealt with *establishing* a group in order to unify and to focus influence. This is the beginning. Next comes the task of *developing strength* in the group through effective working procedures.

The subject of *group-building* will be illustrated with reference to a different group of professionals in the school: the principal and his assistants. As I already have renounced the class warfare theory as suitable in a high school, the principal's immediate staff is an appropriate group to examine in terms of the team concept, and utilizing the full potential of each individual in a group. The administrative team is, specifically, the principal, his assistant principals, deans of students, director of guidance, and director of student activities. In various schools some of these positions may be combined, or there may be other members of the "inner circle." At any rate, in most high schools there are three to five persons who, with the principal, are central to the administration of the school. These are busy people, so busy in fact that they will have difficulty in finding time for meetings. But excellent communications and teamwork are important so that the full potential of each of these individuals comes into play.

The key role of each of these persons is self-evident. It is equally important that the efforts in guidance, control, student activities, and curriculum leadership all be reciprocally supportive and well harmonized if school programs are to operate effectively.

Two requisites for this are the allocation of sufficient time and the application of group dynamics skills. Four to eight hours a month may be a reasonable amount of time for team meetings. Because the principal's assistants may be occupied in conferences with working parents in the morning before school opens, and the best time to see teachers is at the close of school, a nine-thirty or ten o'clock meeting one morning each week works best. However, this should be decided by the group.

The more important consideration is how members of the principal's staff work together. When a group is functioning well, participants will find inherent satisfactions and personal fulfillment which will offset, to a large degree, demands which group meetings make upon their time.

There are some important and relatively new insights about what makes a working group effective which should be known and used by school administrators. These can be presented briefly by contrasting two models of administrative groups.

Traditional Administrative Model

- Group task is identified by leader.
- Objective evidence is considered with minimum intrusion of emotional factors.
- As soon as two alternatives are explored, decisions are made.
- Participation of members is determined by status considerations.
- Superficial courtesy limits candidness.

Effective Group Model

- The group sets its own agenda.
- Emotional factors are recognized as legitimate.
- Premature, forced decisions are avoided.
- Each member participates fully and frankly.
- Candidness and unpleasant confrontations are experienced and worked through.

A principal who wishes to secure the optimum cooperation of his immediate staff should learn to apply current knowledge about group dynamics for maximum effectiveness. The substance of this knowledge can be only briefly touched upon in this study. More thorough treatment of this topic may be found in *Group Development*, published by the National Training Laboratories of the N.E.A.⁷ For a working knowledge of group dynamics techniques, one should have the experience of participation in a group with a skilled trainer, such as is offered each summer at Bethel, Maine, under the auspices of the N.T.L.

The material about group work which has been briefly presented has its roots in the laboratory studies of social psychologists. It is widely applied in management and industry. It is the subject of articles in such business magazines as the Harvard Business Review. In view of its growing application, both administrators and teachers ought to learn better group work techniques if they wish to exert more power in their schools.

Chapter 7

WHITHER GOES AUTHORITY?

"I don't need you to be my father!" protests the sixteen-year-old eleventh grader hauled into the principal's office because of his incipient mustache. This scene sums up much of the strife between generations.

— The young want to express their right to be different.

They want to be left alone, so far as their expressions of individualism are concerned.

They are emphatic in asserting that they need no more than one father figure—perhaps not even one!

The issue is perfectly clear to this high school junior. He has not disrupted school. He has not been rude to anyone before being sent to the office. He has not interfered with anyone else's

rights. His only offense was that he tried to be individualistic instead of being a "plastic" student, stamped out of the adult-dominated molding process. Since he is an intelligent young person, well-read concerning the position of the American Civil Liberties Union on such matters, and familiar with a few pertinent court cases, he feels secure in his position.

Not only does he believe that he is right; he would welcome the opportunity to become the leading actor in a test case to prove it in his own school. This is an attractive idea for several reasons. It would be satisfying to his self-concept to be the antagonist of the high school principal, symbol of the traditional school establishment; it would be an act of idealism to champion the cause of individual rights; and it would vindicate his position to win a court case on this issue, which to him seems likely.

So much for the student. Where does the principal stand? What are the issues as he sees them?

First of all, the principal probably is not naive; he knows that society is in a state of flux and that he is right smack in the middle of it. But knowing is one thing and feeling is another. It is not easy to generalize. However, it may be safe to say that most high school administrators are middle-aged, they identify with tradition, and they perceive their own interests as related to institutional stability, not change. The principal sees before him: a sloppy looking young man; a young man who should be in class; a defiant student (he knew the rules!); someone who is "rocking the boat" and who is about to challenge him to a debate that he knows full well he may lose.

The principal's problems in responding to this situation are many. He recognizes that the issue is a symbolic one rather than a matter of educational substance. And this makes it all the more difficult to deal with. Much as he might like to admit the right of a student to wear a mustache to school, he doubts that to do so is all that simple.

How will this affect the faculty's confidence in him? Only last week his assistant said: "You probably don't realize how disturbed some of the older teachers are becoming about the questions that are arising concerning students' dress and grooming. Why, Mr.

Fitzwilliams and Miss Bailey said that they would resign if it got to a point where girls wore slacks to school!" The principal is beset by a host of educational and school management problems; he needs nothing less than he needs to expand conflict with some of his teachers by appearing to initiate a relaxed dress code.

The smoke in the faculty room is mixed with mutterings about —“another example of the erosion of authority!” Regardless of their own philosophies concerning young people and education, the jobs of principals are inextricably interwoven with the fabric of authority. They are seen as the authority figure by their faculty, by the board of education, by the president of the P.T.A., the barber, the supermarket check-out clerk, and the rest of the general public. The principal is the school AUTHORITY. If he does not fulfill expectations in exerting his authority, what kind of a principal is he?

Yet most principals have been made keenly aware by a number of recent trends and events that their apparent authority is decreasing.

Most high school principals did not always have to worry about their authority. They had it, and they could take it for granted. With this matter secured they could get on with the business of education.

Today, though education is the principal's main responsibility, he can fulfill it only if he understands the nature of authority, the extent and conditions of his own power, and then acts effectively in this knowledge.

One might like to believe the custodian or retired teacher who says: “You're the principal; why don't you put these young kids in their places!” But one cannot ignore the recurring evidence that there is more to it than that. Newspapers report that students boycott schools and sabotage operations in the cafeteria by leaving *en masse* without removing their trays; teachers strike; parents have public meetings at their own initiative to voice their displeasure about the schools; citizens vote down school budgets. The principal must not be intimidated or eclipsed by these events which he witnesses, but he is living in a fool's paradise if he does not recognize them, analyze the situation, and reformulate his thinking about authority and his own power.

In former times it appeared that the principal's nearly absolute authority was derived from his position, and was delineated by contract and by law. Recent events such as failures of boards of education and the courts to uphold principals' disciplinary rulings pose questions about this subject. What is the real source of authority in schools today, if it still exists? Or has it disappeared?

The practical meaning of authority has changed throughout American society. Just as the divine right of kings—once a functional reality—collapsed as the masses of people became more sophisticated, the authority of principals, bishops, college presidents, and others enthroned by the orderly procedures of the establishment is changing.

The fact of the matter is this: authority exists as a real, functional force only when those who are supposed to be subordinate to it accept it. It is real when it works. It works only when people yield to it.

When students in a high school or college do not accept the authority of principal or president, when rioters pelt police with stones or bottles, or when youths heckle a mayor off a public platform, it is pointless to deplore the imminent collapse of society or the inherent evil of the young. It is more to the point to examine the causes. It is not just in the present decade that authority has been challenged. Why does it operate? Why do people accept it in some situations but not in others?

Let us examine what predisposes people toward the acceptance of authority. Four factors are of prime importance:

1. Strong and effective prior conditioning to heed and respect authority.
2. A sharing of the social values between the status leader and his followers.
3. A reasonably high level of satisfaction of the personal needs of the followers.
4. The absence of a potential rival leader who may appeal to the needs and values of the mass of followers and win them away from the established leader. (Dissatisfied rival leaders are probable contenders for power.)

A principal or any other leader who relies upon his authority to secure his position of leadership need not look to the law, to his contract, nor to his job description as the source of his real authority. He had better look at his followers, for if they do not accept his authority, *it does not exist*, and he may make tragic mistakes by relying upon it in his decision-making.

People will accept authority if they have been conditioned to do so as small children. Childhood conditioning is a well-known phenomenon associated with elemental need-satisfaction and the value that the infant comes to place upon the parent. It later may be developed by interaction and by reward or punishment related to situations in which the parent requires compliance with his orders. If the parent has been reasonably consistent in his behavior, if he has utilized natural problem situations, and has not violated basic rules of learning and developmental psychology, the child will mature as a person conditioned toward a fairly high degree of authority-acceptance. If this childhood pattern is absent or weak, he probably will not. (This is not to say that insistence upon compliance with rules should dominate in all phases of child rearing; it is one part of the many components.)

When the leader and his followers have similar social values, the leader's authority is likely to be accepted. But the sharing of contemporary social values cannot be *assumed* to the extent that it formerly could. When we talk about this we must think about social groups.

Seldom is there a revolt within a church congregation in a small, northern Vermont village. This is because the group of people is a relatively homogeneous one. The more homogeneous the group, the greater the sharing of social values with its consequent acceptance of authority. Other examples, similar in homogeneity but different in other ways are a union local, a Wall Street law firm, a Polish-American club, the inhabitants of certain wards or precincts of cities.

People are on the move. The social mixture in many communities is becoming richer, but common values cannot be assumed. In Quebec the inhabitants of French origin have different cultural values than the British-descended Protestants. Northern Ameri-

can cities exemplify value-opposition. Some college campuses perpetuate social homogeneity, others do not.

Heterogeneous social groups with divergent social values are examples of situations where the acceptance of authority cannot be taken for granted.

Personal needs—for mastery, for recognition, for new experience—as well as physical needs affect acceptance of authority just as they affect a person's reaction to other situations. The man who needs to retain the job he has in order to earn money to subsist will accept the authority of his boss. The congressman's assistant who is awarded recognition and status through public appearances and who has a strong personal need for this, will follow the congressman's orders, though they are sometimes unpalatable.

On the other hand, if the personal needs of followers are trampled upon, their loyalty can no longer be taken for granted. Consider this example: an assistant manager has an assignment which he is pursuing in his own way; this does not prove productive. Consequently, in a staff meeting a superior discusses this and tells the man to discard his approach and to try the suggestion of an associate. Such flaunting of the man's personal needs for mastery, recognition, and self-respect may well stimulate defiance. This may take the form of quiet sabotage of the boss's goals.

In a school, if students of a particular ethnic group gain no satisfaction through success, if they gain no recognition through school activities, and if subtle humiliations undermine their feeling of worth, they cannot be counted on as loyal followers of the head of the school. Inasmuch as they are unwilling to bestow authority upon the school's principal, his ability to control and operate the institution is seriously jeopardized.

The reservoirs of authority are within the masses. Critical factors are their ingrained compliance-defiance patterns, the status of their personal need-satisfaction, and the extent to which they hold common values with their leader. The person in charge must take all these things into account.

In many schools serious rifts are appearing between the teaching faculty and the principal or the superintendent. These rifts orig-

inate in different viewpoints concerning the nature and use of authority. More teachers than principals are authority-oriented. The Life-Harris Poll revealed that most teachers would rely upon rules and punishments to keep the students in line, whereas a slight majority of principals had greater faith in reasoning.¹

An example of the way some authoritarian teachers contribute to school problems is seen in this account presented by a principal in a New Jersey high school:

I had a teacher who is quite volatile in my office a few minutes ago. He got upset because a girl wouldn't show him her report card. I had to let the teacher know that it belonged to the girl; it's hers. But he couldn't see this. White teacher, black girl; so she's supposed to do what he says. I told him, 'I'm going to find out Monday just why she wouldn't let you see the card, because there must be a reason.' I'd like to know what it is. Sometimes we school people get so carried away with our position that we forget we are human beings and everyone else is a human being. Even though the child may be younger, he still has his wants and desires, his likes and dislikes, and his personal rights. This girl has been a good student, and has worked hard for that teacher all year. She showed him her report card every time except this one. People have days that just don't go right—particularly females; they have their moments. It's a pretty foolish issue to build into a mountain.

Just such senseless confrontations as this, if they occur at the wrong time and with the wrong group of onlookers, can touch off serious conflict in a school. In one high school near Detroit a long series of fights and other disruptive incidents began when a physical education teacher accosted a student in the lunchroom and said, "Hey, John, I want to talk to you." The student replied that it was his lunch period, and he would rather not talk with the teacher until he had finished lunch. The teacher responded by grabbing the student's shirt front, yanking him from his seat, and shoving him against the wall, repeating, "I said I want to talk to you *now!*"

A teacher's relative authoritarianism may stem from two facts of school life. One of these is the academic tradition that the teacher is always backed by the principal in controversies with students. This custom of unwavering principal support is well-understood, if not appreciated, by students. When students were asked, "Is there anything that you can do when you feel that you have been treated unfairly?" they reply, "Well, you're supposed to be able to go to the principal, but what good does that do? These people always stick together . . . you know, 'the teacher is always right' and all that stuff."

In past times most students were more docile, and parents identified with the school enough (or were submissive enough) so that this united front worked. Concerned about preserving authority and solidarity, the principal could be depended upon to support teachers even when he knew they were wrong, though there might be a private, unofficial reprimand afterwards. Because teachers have experienced the principal's support in the vast majority of controversies, they generally believe that their position gives them almost unlimited authority.

Another explanation of the authority fixation of many teachers is that they are relatively isolated from the public. Teachers deal with students. School administrators deal with the public. During the past few decades the public has had a great deal more influence than students in the operation of American public schools. Therefore, the principal or superintendent, dealing with the public as he does, is in a more sensitive position than teachers.

The school administrator who exerts his authority in ways that are out of tune with community values soon hears about it. Angry telephone calls are soon followed by visits from hostile, complaining parents. The next, more serious reaction is a heated controversy at the next board of education meeting. If a serious difference of opinion about the proper use of authority persists, the principal or superintendent will resign—under pressure, either overt or subtle.. Familiar with the operation of such community dynamics, most school administrators are more cautious about the arbitrary exercise of authority than are teachers, who work in a relatively sheltered position.

Upon learning of a court decision or board of education action

which does not uphold an anti-student ruling of the principal, teachers often lament, "It certainly is too bad to see this erosion of authority." Perhaps so. But the implications of such developments is that the only real authority is moral authority, according to the prevailing community values at the time. If public schools do not want their authority reduced, then they must act carefully in the awareness that the origin of authority is moral, not institutional. They should recognize that if an individual teacher or principal makes a mistake in judgment (which is quite possible, for educators are not infallible), the school's authority and respect will be enhanced if the school officials themselves recognize this and change their position rather than hold to it tenaciously until it is reversed by some higher body.

Authority does exist in schools. But teachers and others who rely on it must understand that it is not theirs on the basis of a "divine right" inherent in their professional status. Authority derives from the requirements of reasonable order in a situation, from the interpretations of the courts, and from the relationship of mutual respect established between school leaders and the students.

Chapter 8

CHALLENGE TO ADMINISTRATION

Interracial fighting in schools often reflects student antagonism against the whole school experience. It is symptomatic of problems which have little or nothing to do with race.

One student tells it like this: "It wasn't that we hated the person we were fighting. It was actually that we were just mad at the administration and it is hard to get at them, so the next best thing was to get to the students. Most of us were pretty disgusted with school . . . us greasers and the Negroes didn't have nothin'. The climbers had everything; they were the heads of all the committees and everything. So we just fought." In this instance, the aggression among students is not racial in origin; it is a case of displaced aggression. The students' real enemy—they feel—is the administration or the entire school establishment.

This chapter will consider the well-run school and will note

characteristics which maintain the loyalties of students rather than alienate them. The well-run school has provisions for order, based upon fair and impartial discipline; it contains provisions for feedback about its own condition, maintains good student-faculty communication, and involves students in the program. Admittedly, all this is easier said than done.

A young man in California expresses his complaints about school saying: "It's also the little things that make conflict in high schools. The food is bad in the cafeterias; the desks are made so that it is uncomfortable to sit, much less study in them. And there are these long, unrelieved, prison-like corridors. After twelve years you get some big conflicts building up. One day they just explode and everyone asks, 'Why?'"

There is a deadly, all-pervading, institutional greyness about some high schools. This quality, in all its oppressiveness, was shown with impact in the film, *High School*, discussed in Chapter 1. The *New York Times* reviewer of this film reacted to some of the petty humiliations of students it portrayed by observing: "A fundamental rule in any hotel is, 'You do not insult the clientele.'" ¹

In some schools it has been recognized that pleasant surroundings are an asset. Principal, students, and teachers have worked together to improve the atmosphere in which students live by providing background music in corridors before morning homeroom period, by mounting art displays in suitable areas, by increasing the number of serving lines in the cafeteria, and by installing vending machines for popular items like milk shakes.

Rights have a bearing on student unrest. Two comprehensive studies of high school conflict, the Life-Harris Poll² and the Westin research,³ have found that students' insistence upon certain personal rights, such as those relating to attire, have been central to high school conflict. Since the courts have made it abundantly clear that students do have *some* rights, the heads of schools ought to establish what these rights are, and let them be known to students and staff alike, rather than operate in a perpetual atmosphere of obscurantism, confrontation, and bluff.

The editors of *School Management*, a highly pragmatic educational journal, document the changing legal situation which is a

further cause for recognizing students' rights, in an article saying: "Increasingly, in recent years, students have turned to the courts for relief from arbitrary school rules and discipline. And, increasingly, they have won their judicial battles. The courts are agreeing that the student, just as much as the adult citizen, is entitled to constitutional rights of free expression, free assembly, and due process. Deprivation of the right to receive an education is important enough to the future of the pupil and his family that protests against unreasonable administrative authority can be expected with increasing frequency."⁴

School administrators, with the approval of their respective boards of education, should face the task of listing student rights. If, in each high school, students and staff were to work together to draft a bill of rights for students, several benefits would result. Participants in the project would have occasion to review the statutory base of school activities, and learn just what support they can expect from the courts. Students and school authorities would experience a cooperative relationship as they worked on the project. Some commonly accepted base-lines for action would result so that unnecessary combat with straw men would be avoided. Guidance in the preparation of such a student bill of rights may be found in publications of the American Civil Liberties Union⁵ and the Joint Statement on Rights and Freedoms of Students of the American Association of University Professors.⁶

Students' obligations as well as their rights should be elaborated. That students have obligations, responsibilities, and restraints (as do other citizens) is a point that need not be belabored. The well-run school will be reasonably explicit in stating what they are.

Much of the school conflict is unnecessary. A student leaves the building without permission during his lunch period and is challenged by a teacher on corridor duty. The student ignores the admonition, thinking he is within his rights, for the school from which he came just a week ago had an "open campus" and there are no written rules to the contrary here. The teacher declares: "Everybody knows that you can't leave the building during lunch! I don't care if it's written down anywhere or not. That boy was defiant to me, and I'm not going to stand for that."

Here is the beginning of a *cause celebre*, particularly if the generation gap or the racial gap is accentuated by little differences in style, mannerism, or rhetoric.

Not all conflict can be averted, but its incidence can be reduced by being *explicit* with students, and by making sure that rules are written and reviewed with them.

In the past it was urged that school rules be held to a minimum and that they be stated in general terms. This was all well and good at times and in communities where social homogeneity was the rule and where people could be assumed to hold common behavior standards. Fewer and fewer high schools are like that today.

Schools have polyglot populations, students of every national, racial, religious, and economic origin. There is great cultural richness in our pluralistic American society, but there is also great room for misunderstanding. What may be disorderly behavior to many school people is discounted by some students as "just foolin' around—nothing wrong with that, is there?" Words which are obscene to some teachers are used commonly by many of their students.

Providing written rules is more than a matter of consideration and enhancing harmony; it is a legal practicality. In countless cases of litigation, attorneys have built their entire defenses of students upon the point that the rules were not made known to all students in a systematic fashion. Judges have held that one cannot require students to guess what is expected of them. So the well-run school will make clear its expectations through student handbooks and opening-of-school statements of rules and regulations.

Small problems which go unheeded become big ones. A day in high school includes any number of situations which may bode trouble. Sometimes petty, nuisance trouble; sometimes big trouble. Among these problems are outside people infiltrating the school to see friends, false fire alarms, large groups gathering in lavatories to smoke, fires set in lavatory waste-baskets, loitering in corridors, and fighting. Too often the opponents in these fights are students of different races.

An assistant principal in a California school reports how some of these encounters start: "Some of the more timid-looking white students are constantly coming in complaining about extortion. A

student may go up to them and say, 'Give me a quarter or a dime' or something like that. If they don't give it to them, out of anger the student may just hit them and then take off. We've tried to crack down pretty hard on these things, but part of our problem is that some of the kids who make these complaints are unwilling or unable to identify the assailants."

At other schools food is spilled in the student cafeteria and glass broken in display cases and windows as an expression of resentment against what students consider racial discrimination by members of the faculty.

Where there is a high level of student dissatisfaction or where there is a strong current of underlying racial antagonism, isolated fights—whatever their cause—have a way of spreading and escalating. One student in a school of three-thousand gave this description: "It would probably start out with just two people fighting in the first place. Then tension builds up and it spreads. School is a drag. Somebody says something wrong and then, *smash!* Say it happens to be racial. The guy that gets beat up is a poor loser so some of his friends come and help him—he gets his friends and they jump on the other guy. Then *his* friends get into it. Finally, it is the whole school against each other."

Girls' restrooms are a particular source of problems, both because of smoking and because of problems like those reported by this principal: "The white girls claim that they are being intimidated by black girls, but they probably deserve a lot of the things that happen to them. It is because of the subtle, cutting things which they do to the black girls which upset them. Our white kids in general are more sophisticated and better educated than our black kids and so the black kids have no way of fighting back intellectually. So they fight back physically and the girls' restroom is an ideal place to do it because the supervision there is never adequate."

None of the conditions that have been mentioned except the wide-scale fighting are unusual in large high schools. They are not emergency conditions, only some of the "normal" school problems. The next step is to consider how the school can cope with them.

Although problems such as these may be inherent to the life of most large schools, the administration must work to bring them

under control lest they proliferate and destroy the usefulness of the school as a learning institution. Basic to all this is the diligent work of each member of the faculty to maintain orderly conditions. Most schools have a few teachers who conscientiously do this. They are present in their classrooms well before the morning late bell rings, visiting with their students and preparing for the day. They exert their influence in corridors when end of after-class questions permit, and they enter the boys' room or girls' room nearest their classroom two or three times a day to show that no part of the school is considered "off limits" by the professional staff. The school with a large proportion of its staff functioning this way is generally on top of the situation.

Many principals feel, however, that this kind of teacher—so much valued in any school—is disappearing. There are several reasons why many teachers do not work for the general welfare of their schools in this way. Some simply were not conditioned to. Coming fresh from college into a teaching job along with 15 other newcomers, no one told them emphatically, "This is the way we do it!" In former times, when the newcomers were less numerous, they received more informal orientation to the professional folkways and mores of the school. In some schools teachers have taken a "What's the use?" attitude, feeling that it is foolish to fight a lone, losing battle—one man against the tide. This is particularly true where deans or disciplinary assistants do not treat student offenders as the teachers expected, and fail to communicate the reasons for their disposition of cases to teachers. The policy pronouncements of teachers' associations and unions, that the teacher is a *professional*, engaged to teach during specified periods of the day and to do nothing else unless this is explicitly agreed to and compensated, cause many teachers to withhold practically all non-teaching service.

Obtaining the cooperation of the faculty depends upon leadership by the principal. It depends also upon pride in the school, pride in one's own work, satisfaction in group membership, and loyalty. The principal's own example of concern and effort in securing acceptable student behavior is a prime factor in this task.

Good communication between a principal and his staff is essential to the development of this sort of faculty consciousness. If

the "What's the use" syndrome has set in, it should be dealt with forthrightly. This does not mean only expressions of indignation and exhortation by the principal or his assistant. There should be frank, two-way discussions of the issue, proceeding on the premise that it is everyone's school—the teachers' and the students', not merely the principal's—and that the teachers have a vital stake in it. If there is dissatisfaction with the way disciplinary referrals are being handled, this should be stated, and procedures should be developed for advising each teacher of action taken with students.

A school where the teacher's role is restricted to classroom work cannot continue to function as a viable institution unless the board of education provides supplementary non-professional staff members to do other work of student control. One other possibility, discussed elsewhere in this book, is the use of student supervisors, but there are a few situations where this is totally impractical.

An immediate reaction to disruptions and fighting in some schools has been the appearance of large groups of parents who have volunteered to add their influence to the control of the school by patrolling corridors and rest rooms. Some boards of education have later employed some of these people as non-professional school aides. The socially explosive restroom hang-outs can be controlled by a staff of matrons if it is understood that as adults they have both the right and the obligation to correct students who are breaking school rules concerning smoking and loitering. If matrons will not do this, it may be necessary to hire a different category of employee.

The relatively new post of "security men" in high schools has developed in response to this need. In most states the principal of a school is required, by law, to provide reasonable supervision of all students and to act *in loco parentis* in attending to their safety and welfare. In order to meet this requirement, more and more schools are employing men and women to work as security personnel.

The security officers' manual in a large New Jersey high school states that they "have the responsibility of assuming the safety and the protection of the student body, members of the faculty and staff, and any person having legal access to the school. It also

is your duty to protect the property of the individual and the school against carelessness, negligence, malicious mischief, depredations, and fires." The specific work of security personnel in a school will depend upon the persons employed and upon the expectations of their superiors.

A high degree of rapport with the students is important to the effectiveness of security people. They should not wear uniforms nor should they in other ways cultivate the image of a policeman. They should work at winning the confidence of boys and girls so that they will be seen as their protectors against unwelcome and troublesome intruders in the school, and as people interested in their welfare, preventing fights or other harmful activities.

A day's activities for any of the three security officers in a school of 2300 students may include informal surveillance of school premises and visiting with students before the morning late bell, helping clear the corridors at the beginning of homeroom period, checking for illegally parked cars in front of the building, reviewing the daily absence list to identify suspended students who should not be in school, spot-checking in the lavatories, surveillance in corridors, investigation of circumstances related to incidents of theft or fighting, preparation of brief written complaint forms and reports to the assistant principal, and a great deal of informal contact with students.

A competent person fulfilling this role is a tremendous asset to a large school and is appreciated by students, parents, and faculty. The security officer's informal functions may be among his most valuable ones. The right person in this job may be a valuable intelligence channel for the principal, a liaison link with portions of the community, and an informal counsellor to students.

Though a background of police work may be an asset to the security person, it is not essential. He should, however, develop good cooperative relationships with the juvenile bureau of the local police force. There should be a full understanding of the scope of his work in relation to that of the police. Channels of communication should be open and used fully. In some states, school security personnel are actually employed by the police department in the job category of "peace officer" though they are not uniformed when on duty in schools.

The salary range of school security personnel ranges from two dollars an hour to \$12,000 per year, the latter being the salary of the security chief in a large city high school. Backgrounds of such people may include work as private investigator, policeman, FBI agent, soldier, or housewife.

The personal qualifications are at least as important as the previous experience. This is illustrated by some instances in which the security people were part of the cause of protest. High on the list of demands in one California high school was the demand to "eliminate the security officers in this school." Behind the epithet of "pigs" was students' resentment that the security people did little that was constructive and made passes at female students.

The number of security personnel required to provide adequate supervision in a school depends upon many local considerations, including the size of the school, its physical layout, the nature of the community, and the social tension level of the school. Two—a man and a woman—is a minimum, for girls' lavatories are a serious source of problems.

Qualified, dedicated security men and women have a valuable positive effect in schools both in keeping problems in check and in reducing the tensions by demonstrating to students, by their presence, that safeguards for their welfare do exist and that there is no cause to fear the behavior of the small minority of aggressive or malicious individuals. With able security people on the job there is less need to call the police when some marginal instance of trouble occurs. It is generally agreed that to call the police unnecessarily is like pushing the panic button, that the presence of police generates unwarranted and damaging talk throughout school and community about the state of affairs. Such talk too often becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy of real trouble.

Feedback, the concept which guides much automated mechanical equipment, can be used to maintain more harmonious schools. The central idea in cybernetics and automation is to provide devices which continually evaluate direction and progress and then vary the controls as this feedback information indicates. This principle can be applied to the running of a school.

Before this idea is examined more closely, it will be helpful to review the problem. Basic ingredients of conflict are the under-

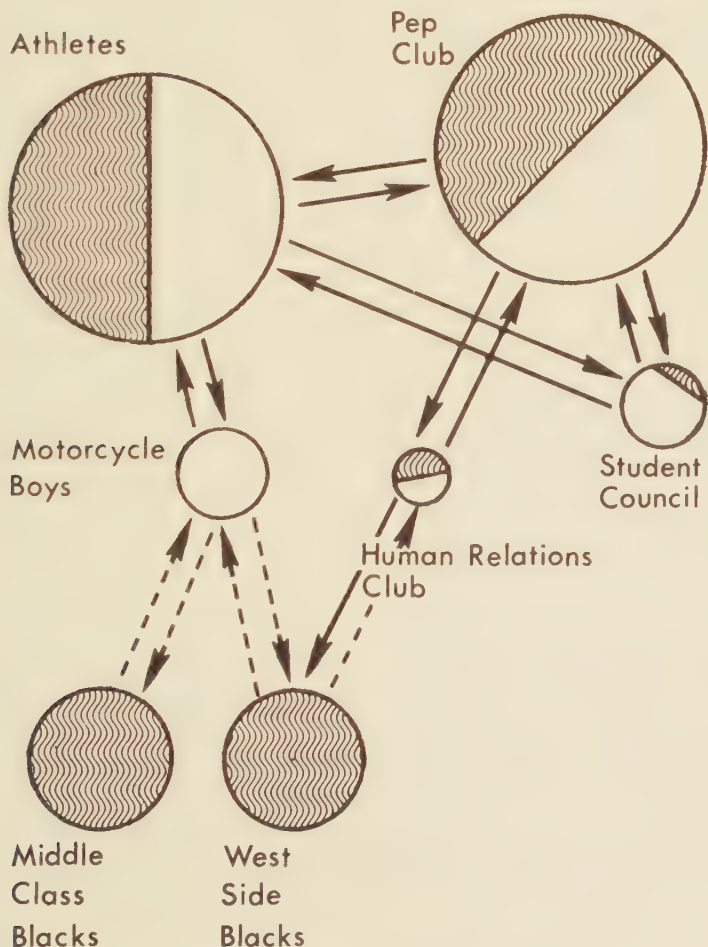
lying grievance level and the gravity of provocations. These are inversely related; if there is a deep and bitter level of grievance and dissatisfaction among the students in a high school, social explosion may be ignited by a relatively innocuous incident which some student or teacher considers provocative. On the other hand, in a different setting where the grievance level is not high, serious trouble can result if a sufficiently provocative incident occurs. David Riesman, the Harvard sociologist, testified to this when he wrote, in *The Academic Revolution*: "When something terrible happens, people always think that there must have been terrible causes because the consequences are terrible. Actually, what often is at work is a Rube Goldberg mechanism—mild causes have terrible consequences."⁷

But to assess the social forces and the provocation probabilities in a school is possible—and important. Because a school is people, and because people have impact as groups, any assessment should begin with a clear understanding of the groups in the school. The principal and others in charge should be able to identify the significant social groups in the school, know their leaders, and understand the way they feel about themselves and about one another. To do this, people who see the school from different perspectives can be asked to draw a diagram of the student body, designating the various groups within it, their relative size and racial composition, and showing antagonistic or sympathetic relationships with different colored arrows. An important caution: the formal, recognized groups may not be the really important ones. Such clusters of students as the athletes, the Bank street girls, the motorcyclists, the militant black students, the militant white students, the greasers and the climbers may be the real centers of influence and communication. In asking people to undertake this sort of analysis, the most helpful direction is to ask them to name groups "that carry some weight."

Once these groups have been delineated, one should pay attention to the tensions that exist between them. These might be probed by questionnaires, but because of the likelihood of repercussions that this would generate, informal questioning of students may be more effective. Experience interviewing students in the 25 schools visited during this study showed me that when

a few students of the same clique participate in a group conference—be they three to six “hippies,” black or white students of a particular social viewpoint, or elected leaders—it is not difficult to obtain pointed and sincere responses to relatively open-ended questions about school issues and relationships.

The results of such analysis might be depicted thus: 141066



A standing provision for students to come and talk with someone, either to "let off steam," to make suggestions, to gripe generally, or to lodge a specific complaint, is another sensing device which can give valuable feedback for the guidance of the school. Such provisions may be a student or teacher ombudsman who is available continuously at a table in the library (different people during different periods), or it may be a full time paid ombudsman—ideally a young, approachable person that even alienated students can identify with. Some schools have a student grievance committee which meets weekly, after school, to hear complaints. The few schools which have these report that there is little traffic through them, but that when the grievance committee does forward a complaint or problem, it is a serious one worth heeding.

The quality and extent of communication among all groups represented in a school is significant. It should occur as indicated by this diagram.



All portions of the school community are represented: the principal, the faculty, and students. Communication occurs between each element. The *double-headed* arrows indicate that communication flows in both directions. Whether this model depicts a particular school accurately can be seen by the kinds of meetings that are called, by observing closely what happens in those meetings, and by talking with representatives of each group to see how they perceive the communication.

Provisions for communication in most schools include the high school newspaper and assemblies. The question is, do these serve the purposes of clear, forthright communication or are they mere rituals? Is the school newspaper reflective of the real social concerns of students and other school people? Has the school abandoned assemblies because they are inconvenient or considered dangerous? If it has them, do they reflect the concerns and interests of students? Do they sometimes provide a forum for the discussion of important school issues or are they simply frosting on the cake consisting of paid entertainment or science demonstrations with man-made lightning?

The person who sets the tone in this matter of communication within the school is the principal. His function in this is not limited to calling and conducting meetings. He should set an example in extending himself to talk informally with many individual students and teachers, showing concern about their problems, letting them know that he is grappling with school problems, and *listening* to them as well as *talking* with them. The principal should spend little time in his office during the hours that students are in school. He can best carry on his work in the corridors, in classrooms, in teachers' lounges, and in the cafeteria.

Two of the issues which have been discussed in this chapter—communication and student rights—converge in the school newspaper. If there were more good newspapers in high schools there would be fewer problems arising from underground papers. Criteria for a good newspaper are the same, whether in a high school or in an adult community. They can be enumerated briefly:

1. Currency; news must be timely.
2. Proportionate coverage of various kinds of news.
3. Keen, probing research, resulting in accurate stories.
4. Good writing.
5. Fair headlines.
6. Opinion and interpretation identified and kept within the editorial section.
7. Attractive format.
8. Avoidance of libel or character assassination.
9. Standards of decency observed.

Too often, the high school paper is controversial for what it does not report rather than for what it does. There are few schools where students believe that their newspaper brings them, in the words of the *New York Times*, "all the news that's fit to print." Instead they say: "We don't really have a free press; every time I write something out of the ordinary it gets censored."; "The newspaper here is not very real. They write gossip, what happened at debates, a sports section. Once in a while there's something good on the editorial page." In one school the principal reported outraged phone calls from the superintendent, demanding that he "do something" about the newspaper advisor who allowed students to publish stories which were embarrassing to the board of education.

The underlying grievance level which contributes to student unrest is often aggravated by unwarranted censorship and by weak coverage of the accomplishments of black students. This may be the result of the common failure to attract black students to serve on the newspaper staff of mixed schools. The result is seen in complaints such as this comment from a black student in an Illinois school. "Jack Harvey, a black wrestler in our school, got second place rating in the finals; Eric Smith (white) got a second, too. They put a picture of Jack in our paper with four or five lines under it; but they gave this white cat about four paragraphs. It's like when I ran for Student Council. The paper interviewed every candidate except me!"

These are serious problems which must be corrected. The question of racial bias may best be corrected by having a reasonable number of black students on the editorial staff.

Establishing freedom of the press in schools may be more difficult, despite the fact that American society has long been based upon the belief, expressed by Mr. Justice Holmes, that "the best test of truth is the power of the thought to get itself accepted in the competition of the market." If it is claimed that this postulate is true *except for students or youth*, one wonders about the implied characterization of the mental processes or motives of youth. Are they *really* qualitatively different—inferior or perverse—from adults? Or perhaps we should reexamine our faith in the power of truth and ideas.

Another United States Supreme Court Justice expressed the importance of the public schools' position on such matters when he said: "That they are educating the young for citizenship is reason for scrupulous protection of Constitutional freedoms of the individual, if we are not to strangle the free mind at its source and teach youth to discount important principles of our government as mere platitudes."⁸

It has been generally held by the courts that the liberty of the press and of speech is safeguarded by the due process clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. It follows that a student may not be punished for expressing an unpopular opinion, whether in the context of a class discussion, a campaign speech in a contest for student government office, or an editorial in the high school paper. Nor does it matter whether the student is criticizing the state legislature, the foreign policy of the United States, the administration of his high school, the board of education, or some recurrent practice of the educational establishment. Freedom of speech is a right of American citizens, including students. The people who run high schools should quickly counter any criticism that by tolerating student free speech they are being "overly permissive," or that there is an "erosion of authority," by reminding such critics that our country is governed by *rule of law*, and that "right" is determined by this rather than by might or by position.

A wholesome newspaper is reflected by this student editor's comment in a midwestern high school: "I print what we decide we want to print. Like during the racial disturbances, we took the position that whoever disrupted classes or upset the school, it shouldn't be condoned. We got a lot of letters to the editor. Generally they reflect the opinion of a whole group of kids. We as a newspaper try to look into this and find out what it's all about and then maybe follow it deeper with an editorial or a story."

School newspapers can contribute to students' thinking about the social and psychological issues of race by special features. One paper published a special feature with three paragraphs by white students under the title, "If I Lived in a Black Skin," and three other paragraphs by black students, "If I Lived in a White Skin." Larger high schools may even be able to support two student newspapers—including one "liberal" or "independent" one.

A relative newcomer to high schools which causes much consternation is the underground paper. Underground papers have been widely discussed in magazines and Sunday supplements. They include coverage of the general youth revolution, anti-Vietnam War articles, satires about school authorities, and complaints about conditions in the local high schools. Some of the material originates locally; some is supplied by a national syndicate, a teen-age counterpart to the feature services for adult newspapers. The rhetoric is strong, with slang and language designed to shock, sometimes by sexual terms, sometimes by the words and cartoons which are clearly obscene.

What to do about the underground newspaper? First of all, allow the regular school paper to operate free from all unnecessary restraints. Second, if the school is large enough, sponsor competing newspapers.

If some members of the student body, as individuals, choose to publish an underground newspaper independently, without using the facilities of the school, the school authorities would be well advised to "keep their cool" and not overreact. The principal should not fall into the trap of accepting responsibility for controlling every controversial act of his students. What they do from 3 p.m. to 8 a.m. is the responsibility of their parents. If the newspaper is libelous or pornographic, there are statutes which may be invoked to correct this. If some editorials or features sting a sensitive nerve of the school authorities, they should have sufficient stature to endure this, recognizing that no public official is immune to criticism. If the underground paper identifies institutional abuses which should be corrected, the principal, teachers, and superintendent should consider the criticism, remembering that perfection is yet to be attained in many of our high schools, and be thankful that the stimulus for reform remains verbal rather than violent.

In many schools suppression of the underground paper has made it a *cause celebre*. Consider this editorial from *Apple Pie*: "Dear Mr. (principal); I would like to express our deep and heart-felt gratitude to you for your recent actions on behalf of our humble publication. You may be surprised . . . but the truth is that you

and your accomplice, the Superintendent of Schools, did much to insure the success of our first edition . . . by forbidding the distribution of *Apple Pie*." The principal's prohibition of an underground newspaper will have about the same promotional effect as banning a titillating novel in Boston.

Clearly no student's freedom of expression is absolute. It is limited, as the freedom of citizens generally is limited, by:

1. Respect of the rights of others. When a student activist interferes with the rights of others or impairs the orderly operation of the school, his activities must be curtailed;
2. Avoidance of violence. Physical aggression against persons or property cannot be condoned;
3. Decency. Printed or spoken material is unacceptable if it is obscene, i.e., if its dominant theme appeals to a prurient interest in sex, if it affronts contemporary standards relative to the representation of sexual matters, and if it is utterly without redeeming social value.

Although freedom of expression within specified limits is protected by law, school authorities and other institutional leaders are increasingly faced with situations where they must take a stand. Usually these take the form of student protest activities where the protesters *do* disrupt the regular operation of the school in order to make plain the urgency of their cause. That the school administrator's hands are not tied in such instances is admitted by the American Civil Liberties Union, though that organization is frequently allied with the adversaries of the "establishment." As an A.C.L.U. publication states: "It should be possible to strike a balance between the principle of order and that of liberty, well within the outer limits where the one approaches regimentation and the imposition of authoritarian discipline, on the one hand, and license and anarchy on the other."⁹

One of the most important aims in maintaining a harmonious and effective school is the development of loyalty in students. In all my observations of different schools, loyalty, or its absence,

stood out as one of the most clear symptoms of harmonious conditions or explosive instability. Loyalty stems from the degree to which students are gaining emotional satisfaction from participation in school activities.

The newly appointed principal of a large high school in Ohio whose racial composition had changed stated: "We are going to give students reasons to have pride in this school. There was a time when this school meant a lot to its students; that is the way it is going to be again. So we went to work on our activities program. Where there had been a little 25-piece band, we changed the kind of music they played, and at the end of the first year that band had 90 students in it. We added clubs that appealed to kids. We urged them to take part in sports. We got twice as many students involved in activities as before—and what a difference in school spirit. We lose no opportunity to make the point that ours is a fine school, and to help students feel proud to be a part of it."

A diversified program of sports and special interest clubs, varied enough so that every student can find one that is right for him, is vitally important in gaining students' loyalties. These informal school activities can satisfy students' basic psychological needs for mastery, new experience, and self-realization. Everyone needs to feel that he is accomplishing something and that he is adequate and competent. He can do that by working productively on a real task in which he can see the results of his work. Only through experience can this need be satisfied; it cannot be talked or therapized away. Self-realization is another aspect of this drive. Every person needs to feel that he is growing and becoming what he is able to become. A school will either provide for these basic needs or risk alienating its students.

An auto mechanics' club will draw a large number of members, students who may participate in no other extracurricular activity. Many schools find that the shop cannot accommodate all those who wish to elect the automotive course, that boys in academic courses cannot fit into their schedules, or that there are many girls who wish they could learn the mechanical fundamentals of automobiles but would not elect a course in auto shop. Auto

clubs can give students experience in working on their own cars, and they can offer students chances to practice in “trouble-shooting” clinics.

Another extracurricular activity that is “real” and relevant to students is a film club. Such an organization would not confine itself to viewing films or discussing them; it would be a laboratory for making films. If the school does not own a movie camera, it can rent one. Through the actual practice of making films, students who might never become interested in the performing arts may discover something about the intricacies of plot, mood, special dramatic effects, understatement, and resolution. Bright verbal students may discover that other students who do not exactly speak their language owing to cultural differences are gifted cameramen, sound technicians, or film editors. Participation is by no means restricted to the number of people who can be involved around one camera. Several crews or film teams can work simultaneously on different stages of their respective productions—story critique, script writing, or making a tape-and-slide sequence which may serve as the preliminary version of a film. When the films are complete and shown, it is clear to all concerned that this activity has been *real*.

Another school activity which is hard to beat for realism is an FM radio station. In one school this station operates at near professional quality, with a broadcasting schedule of about 20 hours a week consisting of disc jockey shows, classical music, and public affairs forums. Most of the programs are taped in advance. Some of the most significant programs were discussions and forums about school affairs in which students and faculty participated. The radio station’s five to ten mile transmitting radius is sufficient to reach the homes of students. Consequently the station served as a useful public relations medium for the school and provided vocational experimentation for student announcers, program directors, and technicians as well. From the viewpoint of the participating students, this was not just a school club; this was the *real thing*.

One high school visited in this study had a library council of 60 members, each of whom devoted a number of hours of service

to assisting the librarian and their fellow students in the library. In that same school 90 percent of the actual audio-visual service was rendered by students. In contrast, the librarian in another school said: "Students working in the library? There aren't many who will be serious about it. I have two nice girls who come in once in a while when I have a special job to do, like stamping books." There are many jobs in a school which are real, not make-believe. In schools where students have a sense of proprietorship, large numbers of students participate actively in the operation of the A.V. center, the school office, the school store, the library, the athletic director's office, and other essential functions.

Tutoring may be part of the program of a school service or a Black Student Union. Some schools have launched wide-ranging student volunteer programs which take students out into the community—their own or another one—to do a number of kinds of work—helping families newly arrived from Appalachia, working in settlement houses, renovating slum tenements, assisting at hospitals, and providing recreation for elementary school children. Ingenuity and outreach make it possible for students to do something more useful in ameliorating the blights of society than to simply protest them. Such programs of social outreach must have careful coordination and supervision if the school is to be directly identified with them. In planning a student volunteer program one should:

1. Provide adequate faculty sponsorship.
2. Develop necessary policy guidelines to cover such matters as cooperation with nonpublic agencies.
3. Provide meeting time in school for each team of volunteers.
4. Build widespread student interest so all school clubs will contribute to any necessary budget.
5. Check on safety in getting to and from the sites of volunteer work.

Alienated students exist in the highest proportion in large urban high schools of 2500 or 3000 students. In every school that I

visited during my study of unrest, I asked students: "What is there in this school which you own, that you are proud of because it is really yours?" In too many large high schools the reply was something like this: "Own? I don't own nothin' in this school; that is, nothin' but the clothes on my back!"

This young man is typical of substantial numbers of students who feel, like Marxists of 50 years ago, that they have "nothing to lose but their chains." They have nothing in this school, nor do they see any future for themselves in it.

Involvement is a problem in big high schools. Typically, the school newspaper will have about 20 active workers, the debating club, 12 or 15; perhaps 30 students will participate in the school play. These figures remain about the same whether the student body totals 1200 or 3000. It would be an unusual school of 3000 students that had 55 or 60 working on the school paper. As the size of a school increases the chances of a student participating in the activities program decrease. Along with the inherent feeling of anonymity and impersonality in a 3000-student high school, this indicates that in large schools students remain uninvolved and dissatisfied, with consequent restiveness.

In large high schools, particularly, teachers ought to work vigorously to expand the number of extracurricular activities available, so that the majority of students are identified with some sport or club. This can be done by having more than one-of-a-kind of common clubs or activities. When you have a population of 3000 or 4000 students, why is a "one newspaper school" any better than a "one newspaper town"? Why not competing newspapers, representing different editorial viewpoints? Why just one dramatic club giving a spring play and a fall play? A large school ought to be able to sustain at least two theater groups. Size classifications limit the number of varsity teams which are practical, but teams in the less common high school sports—fencing, lacrosse, and bowling—can be established. The intramural program will be the main opportunity to increase the number of students involved in athletics, and it should be promoted vigorously. A successful and comprehensive athletic program can be a rallying point for group identification, loyalty, school spirit—call it what you will—and the importance of this should be recognized.

An added problem in running an activities program in a school with a shifting population is the reluctance of one race or the other to participate. Many black students will not try out for dramatics or many other clubs for fear of social rebuff, or because of doubts concerning language ability. Many school clubs are highly verbal in their emphasis. Minority students whose lives have been generally segregated, recognize language differences between themselves and the other students. They prefer not to expose themselves to embarrassment, through poor performance or by hearing under-the-breath comments. Unfortunately, this social separation perpetuates the very differences and feelings of discomfort which cause it. A vicious circle effect sets in, with consequent alienation and divisiveness in the student body thereby adding to the roots of conflict in high schools.

There is a white side of this problem as well. When black students overcome their reservations and come to affiliate with a particular sports team or club, or attend a social event in numbers, many white students draw apart. A white girl in an eastern high school candidly expresses her feeling about relating to black students through school activities: "They want the whole school for themselves, these colored students. If anybody thinks I'm going to the Junior Prom, they've got to be crazy. Do you think I'm going to be one of about four white kids there, with 90 black kids? In my freshman year it was O.K., everybody went to dances; they didn't care if they were Negro or white. But since the trouble it seems like all the good black kids went bad and the white kids say, 'They're wrecking everything here for us.'"

This white withdrawal—probably motivated by the same psychodynamics that cause whites to withdraw from integrated housing—is widespread. In a Michigan school where school spirit had reached an all-time low, the white students were disassociating themselves from most school activities. A teacher who witnessed the social change in that school describes the white withdrawal thus: "The white students in this school have simply abdicated their power. Most of the officers in all the classes are black, the pep club is all black, we have a Ghani-African drill team. The whites abdicated the whole thing . . . they don't even care about it!"

The foregoing discussion shows that the American comprehensive high school is an exceedingly complex social entity. Running a high school well is a many-faceted task indeed. In retrospect, it is interesting to note that despite this chapter's initial disclaimer about much conflict being displaced aggression rather than the hatred of the racist, the racial issue has kept recurring throughout the discussion.

This chapter has pointed out that good school administration means conducting an attractive and comprehensive activities program. Provisions for effective communication within the school are important. Achieving these conditions should bring to schools the stability which is a requisite for teaching and learning. Another prerequisite for stability, the development of a meaningful and relevant curriculum, is discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 9

RELEVANCE IS THE WORD

"I'd say that the fighting that we had in this school a few weeks ago was as much for excitement as anything else—just something to do. Fights usually attract attention and kids want to get in there. It is just a different way of having fun. In school there is no real excitement; a fight brings about something different for a change." There are many ways of saying that school is irrelevant. This sixteen-year-old boy's statement makes the point quite well.

Another student comments: "You go into a class and the teacher says, 'I'm going to present this or that and you're going to have to know this by the end of the unit.' That kind of education is a one-way street. He talks to you and you're supposed to absorb it; you really don't *experience* anything. It should be that he tells you how he feels about something and you respond . . .

like you really get down to something . . . some real involvement . . . student participation, a two-way street. You really don't have that—the idea that you and the teacher, you learn something from each other—I just don't see it happening.”

“Our education is irrelevant.”

“Yeah, I cut school a lot and I get into trouble when I'm there because I just don't regard any part of it as relevant.”

In schools in Connecticut, California, Alabama, Illinois, and several other states, I repeatedly heard students make statements of this kind, so frequently, that I came to wonder whether students really knew what they meant by “relevant” or whether it was a mere catchword, a slogan for disaffected teen-agers. I have asked scores of students in schools throughout the nation what they meant by complaints about irrelevance—what, specifically, are the positive characteristics of the school experience which they seek?

From their answers it is clear that students *do* have complaints. Though the responses vary according to which young person is speaking, there are some common threads that run through them. Here are some of the most frequent replies to questions about what students are looking for in their schools.

Many of the dissident high school students are genuinely concerned about the quality of their education. Their concern relates to the unreal quality of course work which is restricted to the content of the prescribed textbook or what the teacher had staked out as the material of the course. One student complained: “In my economics class I asked a question about the morality of capitalism and about the basic assumptions in the Vietnam War. The teacher told me we weren't discussing the morality of capitalism right now. We were going to be taught capitalism, but nothing would be said about the morality of capitalism because it had nothing to do with that class. They accused me of disrupting the class. The next day a counsellor came and asked if they had my permission to tape what I said in that class because I was disrupting it.” Many university professors and eminent educators are in full agreement that education which denies such timely and substantial questions because they are not in the course of study is poor education indeed.

This young man is one of thousands of adolescents in schools

throughout the country who are bright and who read widely, students who may be more perceptive and better informed than some of their teachers. They are bright enough to perceive deficiencies in the educational system, and their ideals and social perspective cause them to rebel at parental expectations to attend college and to pursue the conventional middle class life. They question status-seeking as a life-style, and if college education is advocated as just one rung in the ladder leading to a niche in the corporate world of button-down collars and country club memberships, who needs it? The smart, skeptical high school student who does aim for college because it is necessary preparation for a life work in a career which is compatible with his ideals still does not buy the traditional trappings of high school education. He criticizes stereotyped teaching and refuses to strive for high grades, for he is not convinced that these high grades are necessary for admission to *his* kind of college. Besides, having lived without want or discomfort in most of his 16 or 17 years, he feels no real anxiety about his prospects in the future, except for the war. If he does not enter college, the other possibility is that he will be drafted and face possible death in the Vietnam War, which he does not believe in. This possibility does not increase his willingness to buckle down and be a conforming student in school, for he considers the school to be part of a society which is inhumane, immoral, and generally unsuccessful in living up to the values it espouses.

Many brown and black students consider the experience and training which their schools offer them irrelevant for other reasons. Most general is the lack-of-identification complaint. A black student says: "What does a black man have to gain from English literature? It is not part of his culture." Another black student says: "I'm in all these honor classes. I'm the only black face in there, and they're trying to tell you how great America was by keeping all these slaves, and all this stuff is thrown in my face like they're trying to brainwash me so that when I get out of school I can be a nice Uncle Tom and get a good job. You just can't hack it. Anybody that wants to get ahead either has to take all this brainwashing, or maybe you have to take all these shop

courses or remedial courses and then you don't get ahead." A girl speaks: "They don't have any black oriented courses in this school. In home economics they don't teach the black girls to cook for the black men they will eventually marry; in sewing class they don't teach them how to make any Afro or Afro-American clothing. They're teaching them white values. What with all the black change going on, they are really splitting these girls, and this is part of the problem."

An example of what black students *would* consider relevant is shown by finding that 44 percent of black students polled in a study by the U.S. government believed that an African language ought to be offered in high schools for black students to study.¹

The irrelevance seen by many black students in the existing curriculum is more than a mere academic deficiency; it is an affront to them as worthy persons. Voicing this feeling, one black student said: "Maybe they don't know it half the time, but they're always putting you down. Some English teachers won't even let you do a book report on *Manchild in the Promised Land* or *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. But *Valley of the Dolls*, that's O.K. Why, compared to *Malcolm X* that's nothing but trash. They're always putting down anything that's black."²

For black or brown students in ghetto schools, the problem is compounded by the poor quality of the school itself. Not only does the school fail to set goals which will improve the lives of students, but it also fails in accomplishing the irrelevant aims it has. This is inevitable when the school fails to command the students' best efforts. It is all too common to hear about ghetto schools where students are passed from grade to grade with scant achievement, their reading level not only failing to advance, but actually declining during their high school years. They graduate from 12 years of futile classroom ritual nearly illiterate. As students recognize the poor quality of the education which is offered them, they become either drop-outs or "in-school drop-outs," contemptuous of a curriculum which is both *irrelevant* and *ineffective*.

Students' criticism of high schools is widely shared by professionals. Consider the verdict of Jack Forbes, a western educator and Guggenheim fellow, speaking of the problems faced by Mexi-

can-American students: "Educators seem often to operate in a mythical world created by their own middle class contacts. Having little to do with non-Anglos or low income people generally, they assume that the possession of Anglo middle class skills and values will, in effect, function successfully everywhere and at every level of life . . . but the educator fails to suspect that it may be *his* culture which is alien and regionally irrelevant" ³

Gordon L. McAndrew, Superintendent of Schools in Gary, Indiana, wrote in an article in the *Saturday Review of Literature*: "In sum, we run our schools almost totally without reference to the needs of the children who attend them. What we teach, how we teach it, and even when and where we teach it are far too often based upon the needs and convenience of the school, upon the comfort of the administrators, and the logistics of the system." ⁴

Dr. J. Lloyd Trump, Associate Secretary of the National Association of Secondary School Principals expands this theme, saying: "We hear much these days about better education for the culturally deprived. . . . People attack the "middle class values" of the schools. . . . My point of view is that today's schools fail the *middle class* as much as they fail the *deprived* and the *affluent* the present school curriculum emphasizes content and skills that many pupils neither need nor want." ⁵

Neil Postman, Professor of English Education at New York University and Charles Weingartner, Associate Professor of Education at Queens College, in their book, *Teaching as a Subversive Activity*, say: "In plain truth, what passes for a curriculum in today's schools is little else but a strategy of distraction . . . it is largely designed to *keep* students from knowing themselves and their environment in any realistic sense; it does not allow inquiry into most of the critical problems that comprise the content of the world outside the school. One of the main differences between the "advantaged" student and the "disadvantaged" is that the former has an *economic* stake in giving his attention to the curriculum while the latter does not. In other words, the only relevance of the curriculum for the "advantaged" student is that, if he does what he is told, there will be a tangible payoff." ⁶

Focusing more specifically upon the school's irrelevance in the field of civic education, Columbia University professor Alan Westin writes: "the conclusion of many of those who have studied the textbooks and classroom methods used in most civic education classes today is that it is still overwhelmingly 'Mickey Mouse.'" Citing a study of textbooks, Westin writes: "A white, Protestant, Anglo-Saxon view of history and society was dominant. Controversial issues were often neglected or excluded . . . statements about American democracy were often made with incredible naivete." Westin cites the work of other scholars to document the statement that: "Civic education emphasizes the vote and minimizes other political processes."⁷

A comprehensive national project in education reflects the seriousness of questions about the effectiveness and relevancy of the public schools of the United States. This project is the National Assessment of Education. In a monograph describing this, Caroline Hightower writes: "The citizens who pay over \$40 billion in tax dollars yearly to support our educational systems have not been presented with clear, easily understood facts concerning what our children are learning in school and the progress they are making. . . . We do not really know what our children are learning. This lack of knowledge has become more critical in recent years"⁸ The National Assessment of Education includes provisions for sampling the school age population in different regions of the country to learn what useful and important skills, information, interests, and attitudes students hold.

I believe that the crux of the problem of student unrest in America's secondary schools is institutional inertia. Evidence of this resistance to change is seen in the fact that soon after the plans for the Carnegie Corporation's National Assessment of Education were published, a professional association which consisted mainly of school superintendents passed a resolution opposing the project. Too often the power structure of public schools has resisted changes like these which threatened to "rock the boat."

But there have been various scattered responses to criticisms of intransigence in the schools. These responses have been as brief as a one-week experimental curriculum and as long as the

two-year-old street academies or the six-year-old flexible schedules.

Curriculum reform is a large topic which has been the subject of many books during the past several decades. The present work makes no claim to deal with the topic adequately. However, in the context of conflict and student unrest, it seems appropriate to go further than to recognize that students are dissatisfied with their schools. The following paragraphs show what sort of school program would be more in tune with today's students. In a few schools experimental programs have been launched in which students have had an opportunity to establish their own curriculum.

Walt Whitman High School in Bethesda, Maryland, operated a student-run curriculum for one week in March, 1969. It was called "Experiment in Free-Form Education." Kathy, a student who was one of the original planners, reported: "I originally thought of a couple of art courses, film-making—you know, things like that. I didn't imagine it would get as big as it did." The program of studies for the week included "Speed Reading," "The History and Practice of Blues," "Science Fiction Literature," "Youth Politics," "Introduction to Russian," "Flight Training," "Existential Psychology," "Physics," and about 200 other offerings. Each student was asked to sign up for a schedule of courses and independent study which would account for the 30 hours of the school week. Asked to evaluate the program, students were enthusiastic in their praise of it. They stated, however, that the improvement was more in the opportunity for departure from school routines and convention rather than in the change in subject matter. They felt that it stimulated teachers to shift from the information-imparting role to that of director of various participatory activities. They exclaimed enthusiastically about the more interesting format of the school week. Two hour classes in one subject only twice a week, four one hour classes of another, etc., depending upon what worked best in each particular subject.

The Great Neck, Long Island, high schools have responded to students' drive to shape their school experience by establishing a "free high school" program as a supplement to the regular "establishment" curriculum. Students can enroll during after-school hours and Saturdays in their selection of 20 to 30 courses ranging

from "Freud" to "Contemporary Music," "Italian," and "Education in the United States." Some of the courses are taught by members of the school faculty, some are taught by students; citizens with special skills were also invited to present some lectures. Specifically, a cardshark acquaintance of the principal agreed to show students some of the tricks that professional gamblers use to victimize novices. Justifying the course, the principal explained: "We had come across one kid who had lost \$600 gambling with some people in the community."

After the standard Regents examination week at the year's end, the Great Neck school people planned five days of student-centered curriculum which would feature more classes like those reported above, including presentations by prominent personages who had enlightened the students in the past—Jackie Robinson on black power and Margaret Mead on changing sex mores.

In conservative New England, during April, 1969, the public high school in Bangor, Maine, switched to a one week experiment. During this week each student scheduled himself to three programs: certain basic *required* class meetings and large lectures, an assortment of "mini-courses" offered by faculty members and outside specialists, and independent study activities. The mini-courses included "Far Eastern Philosophy and Religion," "Genetics," "Coastal Piloting," "Negro American History," "Movie Making," "Public Relations," "Philosophy," "Guitar," and "Banking." Each day's schedule for a student was different, for some courses met daily, others three times a week, and others even less often.

In both the Maine and the Maryland programs the planning was done almost entirely by students with a few teachers serving as resource people. Though the program was of only one week's duration, the planning took from six to ten months.

Experimental programs such as these have clear implications for the regular school experience. These include giving students a voice in the determination of course offerings, altering the time pattern of the school day to afford more variety and to better fit specific subjects, and the offering of many short courses. It is unfortunate that in most American high schools a course must

be designed to last for a full year's work or for one full semester, or else not be offered at all. More resourceful planning should make it possible to offer courses which could occupy only 20 or 45 class meetings, for example.

An increasing number of high schools have adopted flexible modular schedules as a means of providing some of the values identified in the experimental programs described above. These schools typically have the school day built upon smaller increments of time than the traditional 45 minute class period, so that classes may be as short as 25 or 30 minutes or as long as two hours (an ideal arrangement, for example, for a class in ceramics). Classes may meet daily or only once or twice a week. The student has a different program of classes every day in the week. Modular scheduled schools usually develop a substantial list of unusual and engaging elective courses like those mentioned in the examples of experimental curriculum weeks. During non-class time, many reliable students are on an honor system, free to spend their time purposefully at any place in the school they choose—working on an art project, practicing in a music room, experimenting in the laboratory, or doing library work. It is only fair to acknowledge that the advantage of more appropriate class duration, variety, and self-determination opportunities for students in modular schedules or some other experimental programs are partially offset by some students abusing their new freedom. Principal Dana Simmons of Bangor, Maine's High School confessed: "We had a lot of students slipping out the back door." Any program which shifts the traditionally structured school regimen to a program giving students more freedom and responsibility must, realistically, provide them specific help in growing into it. Neither students nor adults adapt to revolutions in education without help, guidance, and support.

This is just one reason why moderate-sized high schools have a distinct advantage both in maintaining a harmonious environment in ordinary times and in implementing needed reforms. High schools for many more than 2000 students should not be planned and established, for they present grave problems of de-personalization and consequent irresponsibility.

It is misleading to discuss education in large, general terms like "curriculum," because learning is an *individual* and very specific phenomenon; it is what happens within *one* person with respect to a particular concept, bit of information, skill, or interest. It is, for example, a question of whether John can today state convincingly why one should not submit to police interrogation without having legal counsel, while yesterday he knew nothing about the subject, or whether he recognizes and enjoys Mozart's "Eine Klein Nachtmusik" now, while last September it was to him but a strange noise. One growing practice which may give schools more relevance is the careful *specification* of the behavioral objectives of course work and the planning of activities for their accomplishment.

Robert Mager, who wrote *The Preparation of Behavioral Objectives*, contends that school would be more meaningful if teachers recognized that learning is *change in behavior*, and that work in all courses ought to be reconstituted in terms of the specific performance a student should be able to demonstrate as a result of study.⁹ If on the first day of school, students were met by a teacher who would declare that by the end of six weeks they would be able to perform 12 or 14 useful operations that were presently beyond their capacity (in the biology laboratory, in using the slide rule, in reading the newspaper, or what have you), and directed them in activities which soon resulted in the actualization of this promise, students would be considerably more interested, more purposeful in their class work, and more satisfied than they usually are when their teacher states: "There are 24 chapters in this textbook. We are going to cover four each marking period and, besides that, you will have to do one book report each time." The new emphasis switches the goal from the *coverage* of material to the *mastering* of specified behavioral objectives.

The emphasis upon objectives is accompanied by a recognition that learning is an *individual* matter. The course content should be adapted to the need of *each student*. It is natural to expect that each student will master material at a different rate rather than proceed at the same pace as his classmates. Much of students' boredom and frustration with the conventional school ex-

perience comes from their having to re-study material that they have already learned: "We shall begin this year's work in English with a six week review of grammar." Perhaps half the class needs all the elements scheduled for inclusion in this work; why should a student who needs only to practice variation in sentence structure drudge through drills on the avoidance of double negatives or the agreement of pronoun and antecedent? In schools which tailor the course content to the individual needs of each student, the unit would begin with a diagnostic test. Specific deficiencies in the student's learning would be identified, and the teacher would then prescribe appropriate readings, exposure to other media, and practice exercises. When ready, the student should demonstrate his new mastery of the material.

It is immediately apparent that the students would progress at different rates. Some would complete a unit on installment buying and interest in one week; others might need six. This is a success-oriented approach. Every student succeeds before he moves on to the next sequential unit. The important thing is working toward mastery. This is altogether different from the present system of coverage of a chapter, then testing (ready-or-not), recording the relative success or failure of each member of the class, and plunging into the next chapter without concern for those students who have not yet mastered the material.

A comparison of individualized, continual-progress education based upon behavioral goals with more conventional school programs based upon lock-step coverage of chapters makes the latter seem so absurd as to defy credibility. Yet it exists; indeed, it is the norm in most high schools. No wonder students are rebelling!

There are many examples of individualized progress school programs in operation. One of the most long-standing is that of Nova High School in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. This program emphasizes "learning packages" for students which guide them in independent work which may take either a few days or a few weeks. The Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, school system has a K-12 continual-progress curriculum. These and other examples are described in the first annual report of the E. S. '70 Project of the U.S. Office of Education, describing promising educational systems for the coming decade.¹⁰

Individualized progress and advancement based upon demonstrated performance at any time is a characteristic of certain exceptional programs which succeed where conventional schools fail: street academies, Harlem and Newark Prep, and the Job Corps. These programs, which have had outstanding success with school drop-outs, use many programmed texts and drill books which students can use at their own rate of progress, calling upon the teacher for individual help or explanation when needed. This is important. No one should think that it is an improvement to supply each student with programmed material and expect him to teach himself, accomplishing miracles at his own rate. The teacher is very much needed, but his role is different. He performs a service function for the student, giving help, explanation, and direction *in response to the student's need*, rather than acting as a taskmaster assigning arbitrary work.

Harlem Prep School is the apex of a three-level program of education for school drop-outs in New York. It begins with the street academies which provide remedial education designed to develop basic skills which will enable the student to do the work of the next higher academic level. This higher stage, the academy of transition, aims at skill levels adequate to do the relatively rigorous work of Harlem Prep which, as the name implies, prepares students for conventional college admission standards. Harlem Prep has a relatively traditional curriculum. The academies and Harlem Prep and their counterparts in other cities have had striking successes: in three months, an improvement in mathematics of three grade levels (three years); in reading, an improvement of two grade levels in the same three month period. In a similar program in Chicago, nineteen-year-old Josh Fleming entered the C.A.M. (Christian Action Ministry) Academy reading at a second-grade level and doing math at fifth. After three months his reading performance was eighth-grade and his math, tenth.

Are there lessons to be learned for the reform of the public high schools from these storefront academies? Maybe. Some of the features associated with the success of these unorthodox schools could be emulated by public schools. To transplant other features would be more difficult. Significant characteristics of these academies are:

1. They are small. In 1969, Harlem Prep had seventy students and will increase to 150. C.A.M. Academy has a maximum capacity of one hundred. This fosters a personal atmosphere.
2. Class placement based upon performance level rather than grade designation.
3. Instruction based upon the learner's experience—"where he's at"—instead of upon arbitrary themes. A student may choose to write about a bicycle he once stole or about the rats in his tenement building.
4. African history is an important course in most of these programs, through which black students gain an increased sense of pride in their ancestral heritage.
5. An *esprit de corps* pervades the schools, probably related to the small student body, the pioneering nature of the program, and the success-orientation of the institution.
6. There is a heavy emphasis upon English and mathematics.
7. The talented teachers who have chosen to work in these programs have a deep, positive concern for students, and they show this in countless ways, like freely giving needed extra help.

A report on the C.A.M. Academy and Harlem Prep published by the Carnegie Corporation sums up its discussion of whether public schools could replicate the successes of these innovative schools by saying: "Not . . . until there are structural changes in the schools which will release the talents of teachers and students alike, not until the system itself is made responsive to individual needs, not until teachers are given a twentieth-century curriculum to teach and more effective tools to teach with [can overworked teachers and administrators hold and convey the faith that students can learn]. . . . Given these things, most teachers might turn out to be more creative—and even more loving—than they seem to be. If so, they will create a revolution in American education" ¹¹

If learning is essentially what happens within the student, then school is essentially the teacher. Poor education which promotes

school conflict by frustrating students can be somewhat ameliorated by educational leaders who will unfreeze the school structure. But the quality of each student's school experience ultimately depends upon his teachers and upon the experiences they provide. In one sense, the answer to the quandary about relevant curriculum all depends upon answering one question: "What is a relevant teacher?"

Students are prompt to define such teachers and school administrators, and to defend their point of view. A Michigan eleventh-grader says: "A more intelligent faculty, more aware of current events and more understanding of teen-agers' needs and wants is what we're after. It also goes back to those who run schools—both teachers and administrators. I'd like to see deans with more course credit hours in psychology so they would understand people. The trouble is, school administrators have to have more credit hours in school administration than in understanding students. I think they ought to have a B.A. in sociology or psychology, maybe, so they can understand students. It will not work to simply say to some students 'You can't do that,' because it takes an understanding of cultural problems that's much deeper."

A California boy says: "Some teachers make you feel good in your class. They make you feel there's a potential in you that you can do something with. Mr. J. makes you feel that this is your class and you're here to learn rather than just accept the information he crams into your head—75 percent of the conventional information you don't need and the other 25 percent you have to learn just so you can get into college. Maybe Mr. J. doesn't get as much conventional subject matter covered from the administration's standpoint, but kids in his class are conditioned toward what an education is supposed to be."

• This student is right. School must develop in the learner confidence in his own ability to learn and a positive attitude toward continued learning.

Students do *not* want as teachers "plastic people"—colorless, less-than-real figures, who are unwilling to express their own opinions ("I can't answer your question; that would be giving my

own viewpoint. I'm supposed to be objective"). Nor do they want automatons, cold dispensers of information who mouth pedantic platitudes. Most believe a good teacher is "... one who makes class discussion the center of his teaching and encourages the students to probe, to challenge, to explore, and to speak their minds."¹²

But is teaching a popularity contest? Do students' feelings about their teachers really matter? Although research about the effectiveness of different teaching *methods* has generally been inconclusive, there are clear indications that the *personal qualities* of teachers do make a difference in the amount their students learn. The findings of several scholars on this topic have been summarized by Don Hamachek, who writes in the February, 1969, *Phi Delta Kappan*: "the evidence is quite clear . . . effective teachers appear to be those who are, shall we say, 'human' in the fullest sense of the word. They have a sense of humor, are fair, empathetic, more democratic than autocratic, and apparently are able to relate easily and naturally to students on either a one-to-one or a group basis. . . . The good teacher is flexible. . . . In other words, the good teacher does not seem to be overwhelmed by a single point of view . . . [he] knows that he cannot just be one sort of person and use just one kind of approach if he intends to meet the multiple needs of his students . . . he seems to be able to be what they have to be to meet the demands of the moment . . . a 'total' teacher can be firm when necessary [say 'no' and mean it] or permissive [say 'why not try it your way?' and mean that, too] when appropriate. It depends on many things and good teachers seem to know the difference."¹³

High schools staffed by teachers of this calibre will be considerably less conflict-prone than those with limited and rigid faculty members. Getting them depends upon three things: having school administrators with enough insight to know what kind of teachers to look for, and who will recognize their value when they are on his staff; having a school budget which is adequate; and having good working conditions that will attract desirable teachers. Of these three factors, the presence of insightful school administrators is most important, for having other resources is of

no avail if the judgment to procure the right quality in teachers is lacking.

What happens in the classroom is crucial to the issue of wholesome and harmonious high schools. Translated into simple terms, what many of the protesting students are saying is: "We want good teachers. We want worthwhile courses. We want to learn something."

Those in charge of the schools must heed these requests. There is no place in our country's high schools for principals or superintendents who attempt to deny them, claiming that it is too difficult to change the course offerings, that state regulations obstruct curriculum revision, that adverse community reaction would preclude change, or that innovations are impossible because of college admission requirements. These objections are weak, imaginary obstacles behind which cowardly administrators too often try to hide. Most state departments of education and accrediting associations are seeking to improve education and to stimulate innovation, not to obstruct it. There are hundreds of cases in which these higher authorities have given tentative approval for a one year trial of a high school's unorthodox curriculum proposal. Parents may be conservative about the structure and disciplinary patterns of schools, but the overwhelming evidence is that parents are more supportive of curriculum reform than are most faculty members. The tired objection that new proposals cannot be launched because of rigid college admissions standards is disproven by the fact that, in general, the most innovative public high schools are those which send 80 or 90 percent of their graduates to college!

It must be recognized by anyone who knows education, however, that curriculum improvement is not simply changing the titles in the course catalog; curriculum improvement is having something more real and more substantial happen in the classroom. As one pretty sixteen-year-old high school girl in California said when interviewed: "It isn't just the course title that determines the relevancy of what happens in class. Egyptian history 1000 B. C. could be more relevant if it were taught imaginatively."

Chapter 10

IMPROVING HUMAN RELATIONS

A recurrent theme of this book has been the breakdown of relationships between human groups to the point where learning gives way to protest activities or to fighting. The conflict may involve youths against adults, upper social class against lower, teachers against administrators, blacks against whites, liberals against conservatives, or any combination of these.

Earlier chapters have considered specific case histories, background causes, and what they indicate for administrators of schools. The present chapter will concentrate on group relationships and their improvement. To begin, here are some illustrations of the need.

In a New Jersey school a white girl said: "When the trouble starts the black students might stick a knife in your back. Out of

the 70 percent colored here, 50 percent are all with it when something is happening. Maybe it's because of the conditions they're brought up in, but when one of their friends says, 'Come on, there's going to be a big riot today, why don't you come with us?' they don't know any better so they'll say, 'What the hell' and go. They don't really know right from wrong, and it's a shame . . . they don't want to learn. If we got rid of a lot of these kids we'd have a better school."

Another white girl continues the conversation and turns to the social activities of the school: "I was at this dance. The black students are getting everything; there were about 90 black kids and 3 whites. That's the whole problem now. The white kids say 'I'm not going to this dance or that prom because there's going to be a whole bunch of niggers there.' No one shares; everything's separate. They don't want any part of us and the white kids don't want any part of them."

In the same high school a black student spoke about race: "In our senior history course we get into race relations a little, sometimes through films. We black kids sit on one side of the classroom and the whites on the other. During a film if you see a picture of a poor black person dressed in rags, the whites sit there on one side of the room and giggle and we sit there and get angry. The teachers may try to create some understanding with the whites, but it seems that they don't comprehend the way things are. They just sit back and laugh."

Ironically, the only effort being made to improve race relations in this school is the infusion of black history in the senior course which is the instance for the derisive behavior and ineffective teacher response which has just been cited!

The generation gap between teachers and students is not new, but it has become aggravated in recent years. A veteran teacher expressed it thus: "As the kind of student enrolled in a school changes we get all this intimidation and agitation from students—sometimes under the guise that we are teaching non-relevant material. But there's a limit to what you can take. After I've been teaching this number of years why do I have to put up with this kind of thing? I'm leaving. They can take my tenure and my

pension and everything else; I'll go somewhere else to teach!"

A teacher in a midwestern school says: "These students have a freer attitude toward life than I'm accustomed to. Basically I am a conservative; you can't change things overnight. These black students aren't getting an unfair shake at all; if anything they're getting a fairer shake than the white students. Since the demonstrations here, the majority of people are getting definitely fed up with the way things are going."

From numerous studies there is evidence of a widespread problem of negative teacher attitude toward students from social classes lower than their own, and specifically toward black students. The problem takes two forms: one of these is a lower expectation for black pupils; the other is fear of their behavior.

A black counsellor in a California high school sees more dimensions of this problem. She comments: "Generally speaking, black people are still a group separate unto themselves . . . people react to them with overexpectation. I don't know why we deal in extremes; if they do something wrong we are overpunitive, and if they do something good we are overpraiseful, and if they don't do anything at all, we are overconcerned. There can be other students, say of white background who can do the same kinds of things, and our emotional fervor is in a different tone altogether as we relate to them."

The attitude of lowered expectations is expressed succinctly by the sociologist, Niemayer¹ who states: "Too many teachers and principals honestly believe that these students are educable only to a limited extent." Extensive polls of teachers show a significant difference in how black teachers and white teachers estimate the ability of the students in ghetto schools.

Many teachers are afraid of some of their students from black ghettos. One teacher in a school about to be integrated said: "We had heard about this rowdiness . . . we were wondering whether they would give us trouble. I think this was the most pressing issue with our faculty—wondering what would come out of the Negro children compared to our white children." Note how this teacher's words—"the Negro children, *our* white children"—reveals her attitude.

Turning now to the students, what they feel and perceive in

the school situation is seen in a *New York Times* article in which Mr. Whitney Young, Executive Director of the National Urban League comments on the social sensitivity of black students: "A teacher says to a pupil, 'What are you doing late? Didn't you wash your face this morning?' which might appear to be innocuous questions, but in the tone of voice and the little hurts, black people have learned to understand the difference between people who care and those who don't care." Mr. Young acknowledges that there are many white teachers with "soul" and "heart" who can work with black students harmoniously. Commenting on the friction which sometimes develops between teachers and black students in schools, Mr. Young explained that students' keen awareness of prejudice is based on "nuances and subtleties and a kind of instinctive feeling that black people had to develop in order to survive. Even 7 or 8-year-old children have this feeling."²

It is understandable that racial incidents are a major factor in triggering school conflicts. (In a four month period in the 1968-69 school year 132 such incidents in 27 states were reported.³) Unfortunately, white people do not know black people very well in the United States. They do not know their life circumstances, they do not understand the current search for identity, and they are fearful of black power.

The negative feelings are not all on the side of the whites. Recently, it has been said that white racism is the problem, that black people in America, accustomed to minority status, have been amply exposed to the folkways and customs of the white majority. Nonetheless, in communities where black people live separately from whites, and where black students have attended eight years of segregated elementary schools, they are suspicious and fearful when they enter high school.

In industrial cities where poor black students are brought into contact with the white children of blue collar workers—themselves a frustrated and insecure group—the antagonism is at its worst.

There is an urgent need to improve human relations. Social scientists have studied this topic for three or four decades. The results can be summarized briefly:

1. Society's norms of behavior, what is permitted, influence people's attitudes. According to Harvard psychologist, Gordon Allport: "Outward action . . . has an eventual effect upon inner habits of thought and feeling. . . . When discrimination is eliminated, prejudice tends to lessen."⁴
2. Six types of educational programs for attitude change (reduction of prejudice) have been identified: information (lectures, etc.), vicarious experience (films, etc.), participation in community projects, exhibits and folk festivals portraying minority cultures, group dynamics experiences, and individual therapy or counseling. The information-centered approach is less effective than the others, though it does no harm.⁵
3. The direct participation in a group in which one can recount personal experiences and which permits some group catharsis is more effective in reducing prejudice than instruction or discussion about cultural facts and contributions.⁶
4. Some evidence indicates that films, novels, and dramas may be effective, presumably because they induce identification with minority group members.⁷
5. Group training experiences featuring role-playing, psychodramas, and attention are effective in inducing attitude change, especially if the participant continues to experience the reinforcement and support of the group.⁸
6. Group catharsis in itself has value which is limited unless this stage of group activity is followed by other insight-building efforts or programs.⁹
7. Knowledge that individuals of another race share some of one's own values and beliefs increases a person's acceptance of people of the other race.¹⁰

Both the psychological research on human relations and programs to apply this knowledge are scant, out of proportion to the subject's importance. Nonetheless, beginnings are being made. The school is a logical place for efforts in this direction.

One way to help people to understand the needs and values of

black students is to direct them toward selected books which describe the life experience of black people in the United States. An annotated bibliography appears in Appendix I. A variety of insight-producing books are listed there, including novels and works in psychology and sociology.

Some boards of education have made a beginning by offering a lecture-style workshop in human relations. Commonly the theme for such a workshop may be "The Teacher in a Pluralistic Society" or "Race, Social Class, and the Urban School."

Workshops of this kind typically consist of a series of two-hour meetings for teachers. A lecture is followed by a discussion period. Lectures in the series may include such topics as "The Impact of Social Change on Education," "Human Relations and the Classroom Teacher," "Levels of Prejudice," and "White Racism and Black Survival." A different authority presents each lecture. Agencies which can help school systems plan such programs are the National Conference of Christians and Jews, a state commission of human rights, or a city council for human relations. The value of these workshops is that they present a broader context for some of the classroom problems which threaten and frustrate teachers and helps them understand the related social and psychological issues. The lecture series is non-threatening; teachers seldom are "put on the spot." This latter fact may be a weakness as well as a strength, for the passive role of the audience as well as the intellectual style and content severely limits personal involvement. The research on attitude change shows little or no evidence that mere added information on social issues changes emotionally reinforced attitudes.

Some school systems have provided a one-day staff workshop, instead of a series of meetings. Typically, such a human relations workshop begins with a "problem census" in which the entire faculty is called upon to make a list of the problems which confront them. Following this there is a guest speaker, often from the field of sociology. A question period follows. In the afternoon session skilled discussion leaders from outside the school meet with teachers in small groups to conduct discussions of the problems identified in the morning.

It is valuable to have the custodial and clerical staffs participate in faculty workshops on human relations. Custodians often see aspects of student and teacher behavior which are overlooked by others. Not only are secretaries in a key position to note staff interactions, but furthermore, they are strategically important in maintaining a tone of cordiality and service to students. In some instances, the cool, businesslike, or busy attitude of secretaries or receptionists aggravates the hostilities of black students.

The social mix within each small group discussion circle should be as diverse as possible, including old and young teachers, blacks and whites, and both professional and nonprofessional staff members.

Though any "one-shot" approach to so large a task as the improvement of human relations can have but limited effect, the workshop which has just been described has the advantage of providing some real, personal involvement. It is a beginning, as is the social problems lecture series. Hopefully, their effect will not end when teachers leave the meeting room; ideas presented should linger, stimulating discussion at department meetings, in the faculty lunchroom, or over a cup of coffee.

Another important purpose served by these in-service training programs must not be overlooked. The provision of the program is, in itself, clear evidence that the administration of the school recognizes the urgency of the social problems fundamental to student dissent and conflict. This is an important message to communicate to teachers and other staff members. It ought to be reinforced by an explicit statement by the principal or the superintendent that fair treatment of minority group students and helping them to succeed in school is a prime concern of the school leadership, and that he expects that this concern will be recognized and shared by every member of the staff. There is a sound basis for advocating this; one of the emphatic findings of the research is that when those in control of the established structure—be it the U.S. Army, Sears and Roebuck, the United Auto Workers' Union, or Kennedy High School—take a strong and unmistakable stand in favor of fair, nondiscriminatory practices, the people in the organization take their cue from this leadership and better human relations result.

The other chief direction provided by the research is that people's attitudes change when they are personally involved, preferably at the emotional level, in the activities of the instrumental program. Four examples of this approach are described below.

A program to develop more interracial understanding among secondary school students was the *One Nation Indivisible?* series of television programs presented in the spring of 1968. These programs, shown on nationwide television, were planned by the Educational Development Center in Cambridge, Massachusetts. During the following year an evaluation was conducted. Consequently, the films will be made available to schools through a commercial distributor.

There were five half-hour programs. Discussion guides were published for teachers. Also provided were three training films for teachers, to prepare them to conduct the classroom discussions. Below are the titles and subjects:

- I *We Are on a Journey* presents, through the prose and poetry of black Americans, the history of the civil rights movement from 1954 to 1964, including the influences of Martin Luther King, John F. Kennedy, and Malcolm X.
- II *The Way It Is in the Ghetto* tells the story of the disappointment of a black family who moved from the South to Chicago and settled in a tenement. It also presents the despair and frustration of urban slum life through the experience of a 17-year-old boy in Oakland, California.
- III *Choices and Weapons* presents the biography of Gordon Parks, a Negro who grows up from a very poor boy to become a highly successful photographer.
- IV *You're Still A Brother* presents excerpts from three earlier T.V. documentaries which make the point that prejudice in American society works to bind together with a bond of blackness all Negroes, regardless of social status.
- V *Are There Many Nights Left?* deals primarily with the reactions of white people to a minister's efforts to integrate their church. (The minister was forced to resign.)

Evaluation of the *One Nation Indivisible?* series showed a positive effect upon students' attitudes.¹¹ There was a "shock of reality" concerning the black and white predicament. White youth discovered a sense of black purpose that they had not previously understood. The emotional effect of the films was strong, and viewers appreciated examples of courage and disliked irrational, cruel, hate-motivated behavior. Studies of teaching related to this television series also produced insights about what works in the classroom. Productive discussions take time. Only after about 40 minutes of the class period have passed does a discussion usually reach levels of candidness and become clearly worthwhile. Male teachers, on the whole, demonstrated more self-confidence than females in dealing with the controversial material. But probably of greater importance is the observation that because of the emotional ambivalence of students on the subject of race, it was vitally important that the teachers of this subject matter be supportive of the program and accept the work willingly.

Another project aimed at improving human relations among high school students has interesting features. This is the program for improved human relations through film study carried on in seventeen high schools in Cleveland, Ohio, and its suburbs. It is sponsored by the PACE Association of greater Cleveland. Underlying this program is the assumption that if students learn best from experience, the best substitute for this is a vivid vicarious experience; hence film study. In this program the student periodically experiences a full-length feature film of social significance such as *A Raisin in the Sun*, *A Patch of Blue*, *Nothing But a Man*, and others. Viewing the film may take as long as three class periods (which unfortunately occurred in most cases on three different days). After the film came a vigorous discussion. In my visits to the high schools involved, I noted these observations about the discussion classes:

1. A great deal is lost where students are all of one race. Where various social classes of both races are represented a much richer experience results.
2. The teacher's recognition of the emotional aspects of experiences and reactions makes discussion much more real

and significant. Examples were when the teacher would ask, "How did you *feel*, John, when they kept calling Gary, boy?"; "John, why do you suppose you reacted more strongly than some of your classmates to that last scene?"; or "Are you saying that reality should not be portrayed in movies because it doesn't agree with you and your values?" This was far different from the conventional classroom rehashing of the plot of a movie.

3. The poorest discussions witnessed were those in which students sat in conventional rows facing front. In such arrangements almost all interaction was between one student and the teacher so that there was no pupil-to-pupil interaction. In the most productive discussions, students were seated in a circle so there was maximum opportunity for eye-to-eye contact and other kinds of nonverbal communication.

Because it may take up to two years to incorporate a human relations course into the curriculum, high schools with urgent racial or ethnic group problems should act more quickly and directly. One method of doing this would be to offer each year three all-school assemblies, each of which would present a significant film about social problems. The films should be previewed by teachers so that worthwhile discussions can follow. If this were done three times in a year, say in September, January, and April, the English department could devote a week to discussions of the first film, and other departments could follow up on the other two. Over a three-year cycle, perhaps nine films could be shown. Though this has the limitations of any one-shot program, it would be more than is done in 95 percent of the high schools in the United States to provide education for better human relations. Suitable films for such a project are listed in Appendix II.

So much for films. There are other techniques which surpass them in placing a person in an active role so that he is more than a viewer of someone else's experience. To change students' attitudes about human relationships through direct participation was the goal of the Conflict Intervention Program of the University of Michigan.

Montclair High School, where I was principal, was one of seven schools in the United States where the University of Michigan's Institute of Social Research attempted to improve group relationships. Although there was overall coordination of programs in all the participating schools by Professor Mark Chesler, the site consultant in each school developed individualized plans in conjunction with the respective principals. Mr. Fred Hill, the Montclair consultant, made plans with me and a faculty steering committee which resulted in a one-week summer workshop on conflict. A biracial group of 40 students, 40 teachers, and a few parents, clerks, and custodians participated.

Workshop activities were aimed at developing a better understanding of members of the other race, focusing upon the *individuality* of each person and upon group *identity*. Dynamics of conflict were discovered, and negotiating techniques were practiced. The 80 or 90 people present experienced a program of real impact. "I'm just *drained*, emotionally!" was a commonly heard comment as people left for home. Part of the workshop's success came from the well-qualified trainers that were engaged, using the budget supplied by the Ford Foundation. Strategically important students were involved: student council officers, leaders of the Black Student Union, and leaders of other groups.

Here is an example of a workshop activity that brought the participants to "where it's at" with respect to the issues.

Participants were formed into racially paired groups. One group had 10 black students in it; the other 10 white students. In the white group the trainer gave these instructions: "On this pad of newsprint we are going to make a list of characteristics. We'll begin with a brainstorming session for 10 minutes, and during that time you are to think about the black students in this school, try to form some generalizations about them, and list as many of the characteristics of blacks as you can." Upon hearing these directions some students objected: "We can't generalize like that; that would be a reflection of prejudice." These objections were overcome when the trainer said, "I just want your *impressions*; we're not going to try to be real scientific about this. Soon you'll see the purpose in what we're doing; in the meantime, I hope you'll just go along with it; your time is already beginning to elapse."

So the group generated the required list, which was written in large letters on the pad of newsprint. After time was called, the trainer assigned the next task. He told the group: "Now I want you to make a list of the characteristics that you think blacks attribute to you white students in this school." The group proceeded and, upon some reflection, made another list of 12 or 15 supposed characteristics. In the adjoining meeting room a trainer was meeting with black students. He asked that group to perform similar tasks—to develop a list of characteristics of white students in this school, and then to develop a list of what the whites thought about blacks. The groups then recessed for a short break. During this time the four lists were posted on a wall in a large meeting room. The lists were headed "What white students think about black students," "What white students *guess* black students think about whites," "What black students think about white students," and "What black students *guess* white students think about blacks." The large mixed group of students was then called to order and told that these lists had been posted within view. They were told to spend five minutes reading the lists, following which there would be an opportunity to discuss them. The discussion would take place in quartets. There were many clusters of four chairs, and participants were to form into biracial groups, two blacks and two whites, to discuss the lists. There was a lot to discuss and the discussion began eagerly, both because the ice had been broken by joint participation in less personal material in previous days of the workshop, and because of the compelling nature of the content of the lists. Concepts and attitudes presented in the lists included white students' concern about black students' togetherness and separation from whites, white students' rejection of much overt behavior of blacks, black students' reservations about the sincerity of whites, and black students' resentment of superior attitudes of whites. There were also some positive ideas. The content of the lists provided material which was discussed intently by the quartets for the allotted half hour and, beyond that, was referred to in subsequent discussions during the workshop and thereafter. Students and adults began to reappraise their attitudes and to get new insights about how their behavior was interpreted by members of the other race.

The participative activity which will be discussed last is probably the most important, the most intensive, and certainly the most talked about. It is "T-group" training, or sensitivity training. Its purposes are to help participants become more aware of the nonverbal communication between people, more aware of their own effects upon others, and more forthright in recognizing the emotional aspects of personality and behavior.

In sensitivity training eight to twelve people meet together. Typically, they begin by sitting in a circle and gradually interacting with one another in response to a totally unstructured situation. A qualified trainer sits with the group.

An important and integral feature of sensitivity training is feedback of information to the participant about how he is coming across to others in the group. Demonstrating feedback is one of the functions of the trainer.

As experience with the T-group technique increases, feedback becomes frank, sometimes brutally so. Yet along with this, group support is increasingly extended to individuals. Participants become more able to tolerate disturbing feedback and, hopefully, to internalize it so that behavioral change is facilitated.

Teachers who benefit from T-group training may become more skillful and accepting in the classroom through a heightened awareness of the emotional dynamics among students and between themselves and students. They may also become more secure individuals who will be less upset by emotional occurrences. The same benefits of T-group training may help selected student leaders.

Though often simplified or misrepresented in sensational terms, sensitivity training is a complex and sophisticated discipline which should be understood as it is proposed by qualified psychologists before being judged. Fuller descriptions of sensitivity training may be found in the March, 1969 issue of *Nation's Schools*,¹² and in various publications of the National Training Laboratories, a division of the National Education Association.

This discussion of efforts to improve human relations in schools has covered a good deal of territory, going from the research to its applications, which were relatively superficial in the case of lectures, to other techniques of much greater depth. These entail

some risks. None of the programs which have been described carry any built-in guarantees of success. Let's speak about this.

Attempts at attitude change may be viewed with suspicion on the grounds that they manipulate people, that they invade the privacy of their emotional lives, that they are a form of brain-washing. This has several implications.

It is helpful to have some of the prospective participants help plan the program by serving on a steering committee. Alternate "pre-packaged" human relations programs which are available should be reviewed by making inquiries of the state department of education, social science departments of nearby universities, state commissions on human relations, and the National Conference of Christians and Jews. Consultants from some of these organizations should be invited to discuss the local problem. Criteria should be developed, the amount of time and money for the program should be determined, and then a program should be selected if the steering committee determines that a promising one is available. Criteria to be considered in the planning include:

1. Positive acceptance must be given the program by administrative personnel, the board of education, and the public.
2. The program should not exclude any phase of the school system, and specific data concerning the problems inherent to the high school should be compiled before objectives are established.
3. The program must be developed consistent with local conditions and cannot be an import from another system.
4. The plan must provide options to encourage voluntary teacher involvement. These should include relief time, in-service credit, or compensation for time extending beyond the regular school day or school year.
5. Any designated company or individuals must have proper credentials and a record of thorough and proven competence and ability in the area of human relations training.

Another requisite for human relations programs is suggested by Mrs. Beatrice Young, Education Services Director of the Illinois Commission on Human Relations, who states: "We have been conducting workshops . . . over the past three years and we find

that attitudinal changes usually diminish unless *action programs* are simultaneously implemented." In other words, workshop participants should be urged to make a commitment to work on some *continuing activity* such as curriculum revisions with reference to minority contributions, adjustments in the extracurricular program to make it more relevant to minority group members, or the development of better communication between groups of people in the school or community.¹³

As this discussion draws to a close, it should be noted that the theme has been the improvement of human relations, not just the overcoming of prejudice. There is a reason for this. The problem is more basic than racial differences or the generation gap. The fundamentals lie in a person's conception of himself, his rigidity or flexibility in thinking and communication, and his ability to project into the lives of other people.

For this reason, the human relations film program in greater Cleveland began by having students work on such basic human dilemmas as "Why get involved?," "What is Happiness?," "How Can I Cope With Change?" This is also the reason many human relations programs rely heavily upon sensitivity training, although this does not essentially deal with race.

Professor Dan W. Dodson of New York University stated: "I do not know if a person who doesn't have empathetic capacities can be trained to have them. The capacity to enter imaginatively into the life of another person and to see that person as if he were yourself—to take on his very human emotions—I doubt if this can be accomplished through training. The task is further complicated by every overlay of social or cultural difference between people. . . . One of the studies of the training of counsellors shows that they come to have less empathetic ability than before they became trained!"¹⁴

If Dodson's pessimism about basic attitude change is well-founded, this lends more weight to a suggestion advanced earlier in this chapter—that a major effort should be the elimination of discriminatory and unfair *behavior* through the established authority making and enforcing rules.

Addressing himself to the question of how to use this approach

to improve the relations of teachers to minority group children, Dr. Dodson affirms: "If I were betting my money on it, I would put it on the principal. The things that I know that were effective weren't done in massive faculty workshops; they were done where a principal buckled down, expected teachers to teach, persuaded them that all kids could learn, made a reconciliation with the community in the sense that citizens would support the school in doing things, and then got on with the business of educating children."¹⁵

This advice is positive with respect to the high school principal. However, concerning the improvement of human relations there is a charge and challenge to others. It can be put in terms of two seemingly contradictory mandates from St. Paul, expressed in his letter to the Galatians: "Bear ye one another's burdens,"¹⁶ and "Every man must shoulder his own pack."¹⁷ That is to say, if human relations, in school or anywhere else, are to be improved, people must come to understand the burdens of concern, fear, responsibility, and obligation that are borne by others—by their associates, adversaries, and seeming rivals. From this can come a fuller understanding and a clearer view of the behavioral patterns which govern human relations.

And everyone has his own work to do, his own pack to carry. It is not enough to watch with concern as the most visible figure in a troubled situation—perhaps the principal—works at his task. Every person—student leader, student follower, parent, teacher, employer, union officer, and real estate man—has his own opportunities and his own moral responsibilities in improving human relations. Every man must shoulder his own pack.

Chapter 11

THE SCHOOL IS NOT ALONE

"I am pessimistic about our ability to avoid blowups in mixed schools," said the principal of an integrated junior high school in a Michigan city. "A lot of trouble in our student bodies is a direct result of specific racial incidents in the community over which we have no control. Like last spring. One weekend the story spread through the Negro community that the police had picked up a pregnant woman in connection with some Saturday night ruckus, and beaten her, and dragged her bodily down a flight of stairs. I'm not in a position to verify the incident, but regardless, *something* apparently happened. That Sunday people were talking about it at home, and they were getting madder and madder. The black kids who came to my school Monday were really disturbed.

"Our walk-out that morning was triggered when we suspended a black student for fighting; they walked out in protest, supposedly against that. But it could just as well have been any other incident; the gang was really *hot* that Monday morning. The point is, so long as frustration and racial antagonism exist and provocative incidents occur in the community, we cannot run harmonious schools."

This is but one example of the fact that community problems and attitudes may incite disorders in schools, prolong them, and may either facilitate or thwart a resolution of school conflicts. The school is not alone as it contends with problems of student unrest. This chapter will try to illuminate these problems by presenting actual case histories.

In one small Massachusetts high school, the issue of liberalizing the student dress code arose. The principal, like hundreds of others throughout the country, had recently decided to eliminate most of the restrictions on student dress. He declared: "We've got more important business to attend to here than measuring girls' skirts!" In reaction to this, four sermons were preached in the church on the village green denouncing the "permissiveness and erosion of authority" in the schools.

In an affluent resort town in the California desert, the local high school students were reacting favorably to the recently adopted modular schedule that gave them the option of where to spend their non-class time. Instead of being assigned to study halls, they were free to use the library, consult with a teacher, make up work in the science laboratories, or simply sit on the grass in a courtyard and talk. After a few months, public meetings were held in which conservative citizens decried the "excessive freedoms" allowed students and pressed for a more restrictive regimen.

There are certain school-community tensions that result from the fact that parents are generally more conservative, more law-and-order oriented, and more apathetic about racial integration than are the students and teachers who work in the local schools. A common greeting of parents to a new principal in a school with a history of student unrest is "I hope you've got a strong fist." A recent Gallup poll showed that the major concern of parents

is not curriculum, the development of social attitudes, nor rigorous teaching, but *discipline*.¹ With respect to integration and related social matters, another study showed that only 27 percent of the parents sampled believe that race should be fully discussed in the classroom. In contrast, nearly twice as many teachers and students considered this topic relevant and worth additional emphasis. Despite the arguments advanced in favor of school integration in the Coleman report and the premium placed upon integration by the courts, only 32 percent of parents would like to see schools integrated. Among students and teachers the comparable figure is approximately twice as great.²

Two results follow from these discrepancies between the values of school and community. First, unless there are some deliberate and skillful communications between school spokesmen and parent groups, the school may lose the confidence of parents. This may happen through misinformation rather than through actual incidents of violence. The sensitive principal should understand parents' deep concern for structure and discipline and let them know his own feelings about these subjects and his plans for making the school safe and orderly.

A second and more enduring problem is that many parents' prejudices interfere with the development of wholesome interracial attitudes in their children. In most communities the separation between black and white adults is great and tragic. While the races sometimes mingle in superficial relationships at work, seldom do white and black persons have any really meaningful personal associations. Consequently, white people deny the individuality of people of the black race, lumping together "the colored," and attributing to them generally uninhibited behavior, poverty, and low achievement in school. Few whites will concede that the black citizens in their communities are of several social strata or that many are faithful church members. Seldom do they show any interest in understanding the situation better or in becoming acquainted with persons of the black race.

Black people also live their lives largely separate from meaningful personal contact with whites, though not entirely by choice. This has borne its fruits of black resentment, suspicion, hostility, and inferiority feelings. The evidence is seen in any high school

parents' meeting. Black parents (or any other minority group parents) seldom attend in the proportion that their numbers would indicate.

Granted, the separatism of black and white adults is readily explained by economic differences, by employment practices, by segregated housing, and by differences in education. But nonetheless, the significant fact is that the social distance between the races causes negative attitudes that reinforce the mistrust and antagonism felt by students of both races toward each other.

This problem is bigger than the school. Unfortunately, in most communities there are no other institutions that are really trying to solve it; none that even accept the problem of racial separation as their concern. In the absence of city human relations commissions, one might look to the churches for leadership in this field. Yet churches, usually 100 percent racially segregated themselves, ignore the problem.

The school shares American society's legacy of racial problems. Those concerned with maintaining good schools should strive to get other community leaders to accept some responsibility for creating among adults a climate of decent race relations.

Parents have opportunities to shape better attitudes toward racial harmony within their homes. One method to achieve this is to encourage children to participate in interracial situations. When white parents overhear their children say, "I guess I won't go to that dance; they say that mostly black kids are going," or when black parents hear their sons or daughters say, "I'd kind of like to go out for dramatics, but I guess I won't, because only white kids participate in that," parents can point out that this is an opportunity to act on individual convictions and to demonstrate belief in an integrated America instead of a racially separated America. Young people should be urged to participate in any school activity that interests them, regardless of racial proportions. Parents can remind their children that cultural diversity is an asset. But the most convincing message is parents' own social behavior—their including people of other races in social invitations—their crossing racial boundaries to visit places of worship and entertainment.

The school needs to have the confidence and support of all

parents—white, black, and any other minority. When school problems occur, whatever their cause, parental attitudes have a bearing upon how quickly peace may be made. Sometimes school authorities have completely lost the support of black parents by arbitrarily disciplining their children for participating in a protest—regardless of the degree of participation. Too often, school authorities have overreacted and suspended for weeks black students who were in any way directly associated with protest activities. Some of these suspended students protested in ways that did not disrupt the school operation. Too often, black sympathizers with the protest, and marginal participants, have been given the same punishment as the leaders.

What may not be recognized is that in many cases of racial protest, a number of black students have been intimidated into participation. In Montclair, New Jersey, many black students reported strong pressures by older students of their race not to attend classes during the B.S.U. boycott. In the Westville High School story, many of the black students who boycotted school for several days did so out of fear of retribution from older colleagues. The Westville High School authorities were smart enough to recognize this and did not compound the resentment of black people toward the school by penalizing them for their absence. A more doctrinaire school principal might have taken the position that he “could not distinguish between motives; if a student has an unauthorized absence he has an unauthorized absence and must be disciplined for it.”

Generally, school authorities will find that black parents value education highly, that they are supportive of the schools, and they expect their children to be good school citizens. When a principal or superintendent alienates these supportive adults by indiscriminate punishment of their children, he loses valuable parent support. There is seldom any justification for denying or contesting reports of parents concerning their children's absences.

Where good faith is lost between the school and minority group parents, events are likely to deteriorate in an ever-descending spiral. The rising suspicions of black people in the United States about the fairness of any branch of the white establishment

causes these parents to challenge actions of the school that their children report as unfair. The reasons are clear. The lack of black people in school administration raises doubts about empathy with black students. These doubts are supported by the Kerner Report's conclusion that white racism is a root of our prevailing social problems.³ Black parents hear their own children remind them that the older generation has suffered injustices in silence, with unfulfilled hopes that gradualism would produce remedies. Smarting with this criticism, parents are now coming to their children's defense.

In a large New Jersey high school with a one-third black enrollment, trouble resulted from the one-day suspension of nine black students for disorderly behavior at school. The principal soon discovered that the parents of the suspended students had many skeptical questions about the school's treatment of their youngsters. A short time after the principal talked with the parents, a delegation of a dozen other black citizens, including organization officials and businessmen, came to him demanding a full explanation of the school's position. This schism between the school and a significant part of the community made it more difficult to heal the social rift reflected by widespread fighting among students. Nor was peace-making facilitated by a clergyman's declarations that the school was consistently discriminatory in disciplining black students.

Doctor Dan W. Dodson states: "The thing that bothers me as I look at the school-community situation in many towns is that the school system doesn't have legitimacy in the lives of these children of lower income families, nor in the communities from which they come. The school community is not legitimized in the Negro community of White Plains, which we studied. One of the problems they had when trouble erupted there was that a lot of these parents remembered how they had been traumatized as children by a lot of these same teachers."⁴

In some communities there is grave danger of losing the support of white parents. This is especially true when many residents are a laboring people who are threatened and resentful at the prospect of black people attaining a higher economic status and greater

influence in society at their expense. When there is deep underlying antagonism within the community, a minor incident at the high school of a scuffle between two students of different races may start the "rumor mill" operating. The distorted story that then spreads through town may cause an evening meeting of the White Patriots' Committee or the White Citizens for Preserving our Schools, where plans are made to apply pressure on the school administration to disallow the Black Student Union. It may be a hate meeting, pure and simple, aimed at encouraging all the "red-blooded Americans" present to put the black students in their place after rumored molestations of their white sisters and girls.

The emotional temperature of one such meeting is described by a girl from a New Jersey high school. She reports that after parents railed in exaggerated terms about conditions at the high school, a student rose and addressed the adults saying: "Look, things aren't really like that at all; they are not the way you say they are, with kids slashing each other." Before he could continue with his account he was shouted down by the adults with cries of "You don't know nothing about it. That school is full of violence; it's like we say it is. Get him out of here!"

Ethnic divisions in a community can be vicious! In a mid-western regional high school serving several communities, one town has a Ku Klux Klan organization and another a Black Panthers' group. Regardless of the principal's efforts, there is little basis for optimism about harmony among the students so long as they bring to school the hatred engendered at home.

But the problems that the community presents are not restricted to parents of any one racial or economic group. More than one school principal has found himself on the other side of the argument with a long-haired boy and his father—a university instructor or other professional—facing the challenge that the school has no right to mandate short haircuts for boys, that this is an infringement of personal liberties. Soon the principal finds that his antagonists include student, parent, a segment of the PTA, and a civil liberties lawyer. Often such personal liberty cases are appealed to the local board of education, the state board of education, and the courts, and the principal loses. (In New Milford,

New Jersey, the school's right to prohibit long hair on boys in the public schools of New Jersey was denied.)⁵

Regardless of one's opinion on this issue, it is clear that where parents join with their children in challenging the school's authority, the principal cannot successfully resolve disputes by bluff. Professor Alan P. Westin of Columbia University observed that the schools may be the last institution in our society to be "constitutionalized," the last institution where the rights of those in a subordinate position are established by presenting issues, making demands, not accepting arbitrary answers from "management," but by testing through the conventional avenues of the American judiciary.⁶ When parents and youth join forces in legal battle, the courts pay attention.

Since many high schools have Parent Teacher Associations or Home-School Organizations already established, they should be made as useful as possible in serving the purposes of wholesome relations with the community. Generally these link the high school and a relatively small segment of parents, the mothers and fathers of successful students. Often the executive committee of the high school PTA is dominated by middle or upper class mothers who are "joiners" by nature and who have the leisure time to attend its meetings. The racially mixed school that has a PTA that is all white, either in general membership or executive board, is missing an opportunity to build communications and to gain support from an important part of the community. Parent organizations should begin a new outreach to attract representatives of *all* segments of the public and to place them in positions of influence.

If the regular PTA leadership is not able to bring about a comprehensive membership, the principal may secure some of the desired benefits for the school by forming an adult advisory committee on interracial affairs. The main purpose of this group would be improved communication between the school and all segments of the community. It can bring together a valuable and diverse group of citizens and teachers to work on the common endeavor of better human relationships by more effective communication. It can help the teachers and principal to identify

problems that they might otherwise overlook by reporting the build-up of tensions in neighborhoods from some incident at school. It can serve as a sounding board for the principal to test community reactions to a new program that he may be contemplating.

Membership on an adult advisory committee on interracial affairs should include representation from the various ethnic or racial groups and various social and economic levels. Its members should be good communicators within their various "constituencies," for example, a barber or a neighborhood grocer. There should be ties with civic or neighborhood associations.

The presence of four or five faculty members on the committee will provide a useful liaison with the school staff, thereby reducing the danger that teachers will see the committee as a threat. A total membership of about thirty is practical. Care should be taken, along with getting good communicators on the committee, that representatives of the disaffected black citizens are included. School administrators who have had the insight to establish such groups often have commented in retrospect: "We discovered that we have only been talking with *Negroes*, not *blacks*." It requires more deliberate effort to establish sufficient contact and confidence with more militant black leaders to obtain their due representation on the committee.

The human relations coordinator of a large Illinois high school comments on this problem saying: "I don't care what color you may be; the moment you become part of a school organization you are suspect [by the black community], tainted because you are part of the power structure. So you have to earn this right to be trusted. This means you don't wait for invitations to come to you; you find out where important meetings are going on and you attend even without being invited. I found that I have never been unwelcome; on the contrary, gratitude has been expressed that I would take the time to come out. If you really want to find the people who are influencing other people you are going to have to go to them. And you have to go with the attitude that they might make statements that are upsetting and maybe even insulting to you. But the one thing that is necessary in this game is patience—and broad shoulders."

The middle class W.A.S.P. (White Anglo-Saxon Protestant) principals and superintendents who have had little previous experience with diversified community groups may be in for some surprises. They should be prepared for the progressive stages in the group's development that are reflected in the content of the meetings and the style of discourse. Often these go from a polite standoff with little substantial communication, to a no-holds barred stage of bitter criticism in which no one really listens much to anyone else. Finally, the group may shift into a rational discussion of problems in which there is a genuine exchange of viewpoints with careful attention to the judgments of former opponents. In this latter atmosphere, creative thinking and planning occurs.

As principal of Montclair High School in New Jersey, I once came home from an angry evening meeting of a biracial citizens and teachers group. My impressions of the painful, though necessary, stage in the group's development is shown by these notes, which I jotted down at the time:

Name of the game: "Knock the School" (any number may play).

Teams: Black parents, sometimes accompanied by students, on one team; school staff members, preferably administrators, on the other, smaller team.

Play: The parent team carries the ball and has the offensive most of the time. Play is started by parents putting the educators on the defensive by asking challenging questions. As soon as an answer is half given, the next challenging question is posed.

Rules for offensive play:

1. Always make complaints that are at least a month old.
2. Keep criticism of the school somewhat general; do not use names or dates.
3. Confine criticism to school persons not present at the meeting so that no defense can be given.
4. Keep the discussion on an opposite-side basis; show

that black is the innocent victim of injustice, white is always wrong. Do not confuse the issue by admitting that *both* parties should change or work toward solutions of problems.

5. When the school people describe a new, positive feature of the school, like a new course or addition to the staff, quickly knock it. Either name some negative feature or, if you cannot do this, complain that the improvement should have been started ten years ago.
6. Remember, all black students must be prepared for college; this is basic!
7. Complete loyalty to the team is essential. If another teammate carries any of these rules too far, be silent. Points will be deducted for any statements of a compromise or in-between nature.

Rules for defensive play:

1. Make answers to criticisms brief. The large number of players on the other team all need to participate.
2. Never place blame or responsibility on minority students; this will result in a penalty lecture called, "Four Hundred Years of Slavery."

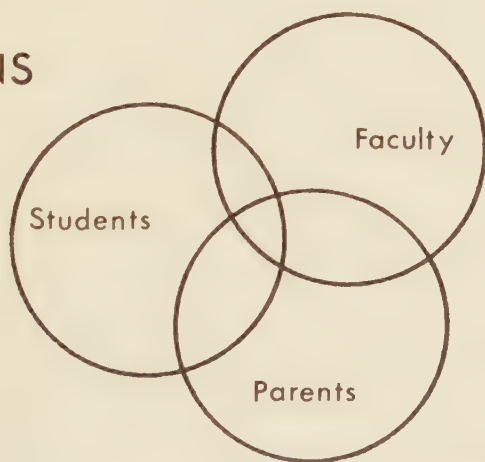
This is, admittedly, a one-sided appraisal that was made during the period of "growing pains" of a committee that subsequently became an important help to Montclair High School. Probably some of the parents and citizens who attended the meeting felt that I was equally unreasonable. The point is, where dialogue with the *real* community is to be undertaken, there must be the ability to tolerate verbal conflict and to work it through so that effective problem-solving may begin. Sometimes a citizen whose professional training has included the study of group dynamics—perhaps a YMCA director or a social worker—can help the group to survive this difficult stage.

To place in perspective the foregoing thoughts on the school's relationship with parents, a comment upon jurisdiction and re-

sponsibilities may be pertinent. There are a host of varied problems and issues that arise in running a large, comprehensive high school. As each problem arises, the immediate reaction may be: "The faculty (or principal) had better hurry up and straighten that one out!" But the problems do not really all belong to the faculty (or to the principal). Conditions in the girls' toilets in the school are primarily the concern of the girls who use them. The driving habits of boys ought to be of greatest concern to their parents. The provision of a monthly newsletter for parents ought to be a project over which parents have some jurisdiction.

This conception about the various groups that have a stake in a high school may be illustrated thus:

SCHOOL CONCERNS



As the diagram suggests, there are some concerns which properly belong to the faculty, some which are the students', and some which are the joint concern of both and on which both should work cooperatively.

Clear identification of the dimensions of any problem is fundamental to its solution. Furthermore, if today's beleaguered schools can get students and parents, respectively, to accept more respon-

sibility for solving problems that are mainly theirs, it will lead to more rapid and enduring progress.

Nonetheless, the principal is the head of the school. His own skills and style set the tone in school-community relations. In two of the schools included in this study, the boards of education had recently appointed black principals in the hope that they could earn the confidence of students and parents, who were mainly of their own race. These principals did not rely upon racial identification alone to heal the community-school rifts. One man described his tactics for accomplishing this program as follows:

I see any parent any time they come here wanting to see me. I don't insist upon appointments. Of course, I encourage them, because that is easier for me, but I've told my secretary that if somebody comes here to see me, I'll see them—I won't turn them away. A lot of these people work at jobs where to come to school once represents a lot of trouble and sometimes financial sacrifice, and if they come here they deserve at least the satisfaction of seeing the person they wanted to talk with. And you've got to remember that some of them have recently moved here from places where they aren't used to going through all these formalities of appointments. By this practice of seeing any parent that comes and asks to talk with me, I can ease a lot of potentially bad problems. As I see it, that's my job. If the principal works this way and lets counselors and teachers know that this is what he expects generally, the staff begins to get the message. I think this is the first step in giving parents the feeling that school isn't the teachers' or the principal's little castle. Parents get the feeling it is *theirs*. Then, and only then, can you begin to bridge the gap between school and community.

With careful work of this kind, the principal may find that he has allies among the parents—black and white—who will rise to the school's defense when opposition arises from any quarter, perhaps in the form of an anti-school "hate" meeting. Moreover, pro-school parents can be helpful mediators between alienated students and the school authorities.

In communities where parents stay away from school functions, possibly because they regard the school as awesome and formidable, the principal, guidance staff, and teachers can, in a sense, bring the school to the people. This can be done in a number of ways. Home visits are one possibility. Teachers and principals who believe that their work with young people must be based upon the realities of life at home and in the neighborhood ought to go out and make some family visits. These visits would acquaint them with the students' life-circumstances and would help in educational planning. They, in turn, would demonstrate good faith in the matter of school-community cooperation, showing that the school is willing to go half-way.

Meetings for parents are another matter. At any mixed schools the "Visit the School Night" reveals a conspicuous absence of the poorer parents, parents of the nonacademic students, and minority parents (often all the same group). Part of the reason may be a reluctance to mix with other people who are better dressed or more articulate. The absent parents may have negative feelings about the school—it represents judgment, criticism, and failure. It is alien territory.

These barriers may be overcome by bringing parent programs to the community and holding them in church halls and neighborhood centers instead of at school. Parents should be asked to take part in the planning and publicizing of such meetings. Suitable topics that may hold interest for poorer parents include financial aid for college, various kinds of further education, and ingredients of high school success.

Another means of going to the community is by telephone. The community relations director of one of Illinois' largest suburban schools said: "Though I am supposed to work mainly with newspapers, in recent months I have come to believe in the importance of one-to-one contact, the personal touch. We've got to reach some of the critical parents who easily "brush off" our news releases. The telephone may be the best way of doing this. We must take the initiative in an outreach to these people if we are going to make any progress in building trust. A telephone call to present the school's case may be the best first step."

A discussion of outside forces affecting conflict in high schools

must not omit the Students for a Democratic Society. S.D.S. has received much attention in the news media. In discussions of conflict in the schools, someone inevitably remarks within the first few minutes of conversation: "Isn't the S.D.S. responsible for most of this high school unrest?" The answer is "no," at least not in the twenty-five schools I visited as part of this study. None of the principals I saw identified S.D.S. as a prime factor in the unrest in his own high school.

One principal said: "Only about 1 percent of the students in my school are creating this turmoil. There are others who have become active after some issue has been created, but I doubt if they feel as strongly as these central radicals do." This man went on to voice a suspicion that the radical students got some aid from the S.D.S., including press handouts for use in their leaflets and underground newspapers. Actual members of S.D.S. in his school were few, if any, he judged.

Quite apart from actual S.D.S. membership, many high schools have a dozen or so intellectual, liberal-minded students who advocate sharp changes from the status quo, both in school and in society. Speaking of these young people, one of the "straight" students in a New Jersey high school said: "Well, they can be classified as hippies, not in a derogatory sense, but they're different from the "climbers" in this school who are trying to be first in all the school organizations. Yet these kids are in the upper half of the class and they are going to reputable colleges."

One of the radicals says, "Our organization has progressed from a pacifist to a very militant organization. They used to call me a hippie when I walked into gym class with my long hair, but I broke their stereotype of a hippie by punching them in the nose and they haven't bothered me since. One thing about those 'straight' students; they're just not oriented to our way of thinking. They're uneducated and, in general, from a working class background."

Some of the students, regarded by the general public as "S.D.S.-ers," sound like tired and disillusioned young idealists. Sometimes they smart at rejections by Black Student Unions with whom they try to form coalitions. They put some reliance upon gaining sup-

port from other students when they initiate protest activities and are "smashed" by a strong show of vindictive discipline by the administration. One young California radical said: "I have come to the point where I think that the only positive thing we can do is to help other students understand what has happened to us, and make them understand why the principal is so anxious about what we are doing and is trying so hard to keep us quiet. That way, if we 'do our own thing' and get smashed, we will get a lot of people educated, and gradually the school will swing around to our values. Then we can accomplish what we hope to. I think the correct ideas will inevitably win."

That is the aspect of student radicalism (often mislabeled S.D.S.) within the high schools visited in this study. From the university vantage point, things look a bit different. Interviews at Columbia University revealed that both there and at other colleges in the area, S.D.S. students were working with high school youths. The contact involved cooperation among college and high school students in community organizations and, more importantly, in storefronts which the S.D.S. had set up. In these storefronts, the high school students could get advice on the draft and obtain bail-money. Columbia's S.D.S. also helps high school students set up and organize demonstrations and assists in the organization of newspapers, both school and underground. For the most part, it is the high school students who initiate the contact with Columbia's S.D.S. chapter. Usually it is the high school students who come to the storefronts, not the college students who go directly to the high schools. The help is spontaneous, not planned in advance, and it is geared to a particular situation. Some high school students look specifically to S.D.S. because it is the major radical group on school campuses, thus the most natural organization to turn to. The college S.D.S. members are willing and eager to help their high school counterparts, but for the most part are not initiating the action. One major exception to this occurred on the first anniversary of the Spring, 1968 disturbance at Columbia when Columbia's S.D.S. invited high school students and their parents to come to the campus for a protest demanding open admissions.

From visits to various high schools in New Jersey, the following can be presented as representing the state of affairs. The radical element in the school is in an embryonic state, yet is fast developing. The students have no definite connection with S.D.S., but many of their complaints and goals are the same. They feel that the student government is merely an arm of the administration, accomplishing nothing, echoing the status quo. The radical students are critical of the administration. They claim it is negative because there is no real communication between students and administration, owing to the *attitudes* of these school adults and not to a lack of actual conversations. The students feel that often the principal is two-faced: smiling, talking down to students as if they were children, saying, "Yes, I agree with you," and then not following through with any action after the discussion. They believe that the administration avoids the real issues, trying to hide weaknesses in the system. One student pointed out that he was suspended for distributing leaflets in school on the grounds that he had a captive market, while every day all students are required to listen to the principal talk over the intercom system as they sit in homeroom class. When the principal suspends a student for expressing dissenting views, directly or by distributing leaflets, students criticize him for overreacting in a compulsive show of authority.

The egalitarian values of the radical students are offended by the "track" system, where students are classified by academic performance. These classifications often reflect social class and students have little opportunity to mix with one another outside these categories. They oppose the emphasis on grades in high school, contending that it causes unnecessary competition to the detriment of learning for learning's sake. They object to infringements upon freedom of speech such as the censoring of the school paper.

Basically, these intellectual liberal students resent being treated like little children with few rights or privileges. They resent the parent-like role of school authorities who prohibit smoking, insist upon hall passes, and impose other kinds of censorship. They want a voice in shaping their school environment by easing the

restrictions, creating more relevant courses, and releasing students' creativity. They want to be treated like adults.

Other potential outside agitators are the castoffs from many high schools—the dropouts and pushouts. When the overage sophomore who did not adjust well to school dropped out, and when last year's senior who was suspended for fighting left the office in September, denied readmission, they did not pass out of existence. Some such young people find employment; some do not. Many frequent the bowling alley, the candy store, or the pool hall near the school. There they listen to the gripes of the alienated students who gather after school. When they hear the specific complaints and the rumored stories of discriminatory dual-standard discipline, there is no doubt that they support students' feelings of discontent, speaking of their own unsatisfactory experiences at school. Just how much influence these former students have is uncertain, but various case studies of high school conflict show that they play their part. School authorities would do well to realize that hard though it may be to deal with some of their students, the problem is not really eliminated by persuading parents to withdraw these students from school. The young people still exist, and they will, in one way or another, try to satisfy their basic personal needs. They may even try to repay old scores with the school when they are released from the constricted status of student. High school principals must realize that the most threatening outside agitators may be adversaries of their own creation.

Still another source of interference in the orderly running of schools may be political figures. Some politicians have recognized that school strife provides opportunities to gain visibility by championing a cause. L.A. Harrington, one of the administrators of the Los Angeles schools, described this phenomenon as it related to the Los Angeles' "school blowout" in the spring of 1968. Harrington wrote in *Phi Delta Kappan*: "Political opportunists saw a power vacuum and seized the opportunity to cut a niche for themselves . . . it was, some say, the beginning of a revolution—the Mexican-American Revolution of 1968."⁷ In different regions and different communities the names of the players may change,

but the game is the same. When a racial minority is gaining ground or when students generally are gaining concessions—that is, when the formerly powerless are attaining their goals—some political opportunists can gather unsophisticated followers by criticizing school leaders for “weakness,” “selling out to the minority group” whatever it may be, or “inability to hold the line.”

In cities where there are different quasi-political organizations seeking to gain power in the black community, these competing factions likewise make political capital from dissension and disruption in the schools. Whatever their origin and whatever their motives, the politically motivated sideline-coaching in school disputes inflames the situation by fiery rhetoric and works against the efforts to restore harmony.

In talking with acquaintances about my study of high school conflict, I came to recognize certain predictable reactions. There was the shudder of apprehension, the mutterings about long-haired kids, the sad head-shaking. “Don’t you think the press and television stir up a lot of this trouble?” was a comment made with great frequency. Both the general public and school people hold the communications media responsible for much of the protest and disruptive behavior of students.

One educator summed up the sentiments of many, saying: “Half the problems with young people today are caused by newspapers and television. A demonstration occurs on some college campus halfway across the country. The news media arrive, close-ups are shown of students heckling the college president, picketing classes, and fighting the police. Our high school students see all this, and of course they are affected; high school kids have always wanted to copy college students. When there is trouble in another high school, a picture of the leader of the rioting students appears in practically every newspaper in the state, along with some of his statements. He’s a big hero.”

One high school principal said: “You know how we know when there’s going to be trouble in our school? At about eleven o’clock in the morning we see the TV station’s mobile units parking across the street from our front entrance. They have had a phone call from a student and they are actually on the scene before the

trouble starts, so that they can get their cameras set up for the noon-hour action!"

Spokesmen for the news media tell the other side of the story:

We have a public service to perform. In our society the people have a right to be informed. Naturally, we regard news centering in the schools and colleges as important. Everyone is interested in the welfare and safety of young people. School administrators are not very sophisticated about this. I can understand their tendency to panic when there is an uprising among their students. However, that does not justify their attempts to enforce an information blackout with such tactics as refusing to comment. A lot of people would have liked to manage or control the dissemination of news in Hitler's Germany too, but that just isn't the way you do things in this country. Furthermore, the gathering and reporting of news is business, and a highly competitive one. If we don't get the story, the city's other newspaper or TV station will. We are competing with them for the same audience. We want the story!

If a school administrator wants to surmount the wall of mistrust between school and press, he can take some positive steps. The public information office of the Los Angeles city schools has implemented a philosophy of forthrightness that might well be emulated. It tries to keep the press well informed about the background information before the issues and forces explode into events that may become headline news. Periodically the superintendent invites representatives of the press to attend briefings. In these meetings the school officials state frankly what the problem is, present relevant background information so the newsmen see the issue in perspective, and explain how the school authorities will act to safeguard the interests and welfare of students.

This tactic has been used not only with educationally significant issues but even with cases of teacher misconduct. The Los Angeles public school authorities recognize that any event that results in an arrest is available to the news media through the police records.

The chances are that fairer news treatment will result if the school presents the whole story to the press, rather than if reporters ferret out the bits and pieces of what might be a sensational story.

Dr. Owen Kiernan, former Commissioner of Education in Massachusetts, reports good results from giving monthly luncheons for the press. The education writers and editors of the larger newspapers in the state were invited. These full briefings on important educational issues paid dividends in obtaining advantageous placement of news stories within a paper as well as an understanding editorial viewpoint.

Some school administrators have found that if they take the initiative and notify the news services of possible demonstrations, giving as full an account as possible of the issues, they sometimes avert the dispatch of sound and camera crews. To send out a TV crew represents considerable cost. If the school authorities will help the station get the story in a cheaper, albeit less dramatic, way, it may prove to be mutually beneficial.

To reduce the adverse effects of a reporter roaming the corridors and cafeteria of a riot-torn school with camera or taperecorder in hand questioning students, the principal can ask reporters to station themselves in a makeshift press room near his office. He can agree to go there periodically or send a representative to give an account of what is happening, or he can bring in students for interviews. This restriction of movement of the press is enforceable. Reporters realize that the principal can order them completely off campus if he chooses to do so. Operating from a designated location in the school is preferable to this.

If the school expects cooperation from the press there must be some reciprocity. Besides cultivating good press relations in times of tranquillity, the principal should try to be reasonably available to the press or see that reporters are directed to the school system's coordinator of public information when trouble occurs. Except in rare cases, the principal should have some positive reply to reporters' questions instead of a terse, "No comment."

The school authorities should recognize that the press *will* get the story. Whether it appears in a form that is favorable to the

school's interest, or at least fair, depends to a great extent upon the human relations skills of the school people. "If one shows some trust in the press, if you level with them and cooperate, giving as fair and honest an account of events as you can, they will cooperate with you more often than not," advises Mr. William Rivera, Assistant Public Information Officer of the Los Angeles city schools.

To summarize, the school is not alone; it is but one player on a lively and crowded social stage. It is doubtful that conflict in schools can be avoided entirely. However, it will be less grave and injurious, and of briefer duration, if school officials will identify with other leaders and factions in the community and work at developing good relationships with them in order to gain general credence and support.

Chapter 12

RECOMMENDATIONS

Military commanders often receive sealed secret orders for reasons of security, and so that they will attend to their own assignment without distraction from other parts of the battlefield. Recommendations in this chapter for people concerned with school conflict likewise may be regarded as specific messages to specific people. Too often, in times of crisis, parents and others accost the principal asking: "What are *you* going to do? Shouldn't the *teachers* be stricter? The *Board of Education* should close school!" All of these voice concern for the obligations of others. The need is for each person to see what *his own* responsibilities are and singlemindedly to fulfill them.

The public high schools of our country are worth saving. Through the public schools, persons from different social classes have learned to respect and to live with one another harmoniously.

Through the public schools young people have discovered their potential as individuals and have risen from farmer's son to Ph.D., and from peddler's daughter to Broadway actress. The high schools are vitally important to the realization of the American dream.

What lies ahead is by no means clear nor assured. Perhaps public secondary schools will continue with minor changes and adaptations. Perhaps owing to changing patterns of residence and social fragmentation there will be a growing separation with more all-black high schools in cities and all-white high schools in other communities so that there are fewer and fewer opportunities for the races to mingle. In some towns the public high schools may come to be attended only by middle class and lower class people, the others who can afford to do so sending their students to independent schools or religious schools either out of fear in conflict-ridden schools or to avoid the diluted academic quality of a school where educational leadership is eclipsed by administrative preoccupation with student control and security. Each reader of this book, be he superintendent of schools, high school sophomore, or parent, can in some way influence the outcome of the dilemma.

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Each student should strive to influence the quality of student leadership in his schools. This includes formal leadership positions like student council president and the real leadership of informal, spontaneous groups which seek to make changes which are important to students. In schools where students are frustrated in countless ways and where there is no improvement through conventional means, one day some student is likely to climb the front steps, make a convincing speech, and thereby become the leader of 500 protesting students. However, the best leader may not be the first one to bid for crowd support nor the one with the most inflammatory rhetoric. Each of the 500 students ought to do his bit to see that the best leader possible is the one who is supported and followed.

Each student should consider whether it really is best to clash with principal and teachers early and hard, or whether schools cannot better be reformed by beginning with efforts to talk with those in authority. Be insistent upon talking with them; be pre-

pared and convincing. There is nothing to gain by alienating school officials with tactics which quickly polarize the conflict into a good-versus-evil game.

Force the student government to become assertive and influential. For a number of reasons student government ought to be able to accomplish things for students. There is no more reason for students to be satisfied with a do-nothing student council than for citizens to be content with a weak, ineffective government.

Racial misunderstanding and antagonism is at the bottom of much high school conflict. It follows that students who have escaped the curse of racial bigotry and can see things clearly are an important part of the remedy. These insightful young people must exert their influence and urge others to be fair.

Students must keep their idealism and individualism and not be browbeaten into complete conformity. Jesus said that yeast had to be yeasty in order for bread to rise. The same message came through, negatively, from the recent film *High School*¹ when a girl was rebuked for some small infraction of school rules with a teacher saying: "... there are certain places to be individualistic." The girl, near tears, recants: "I didn't mean to be individualistic."

TEACHERS

In view of their numbers, their professional training and their commitment to education, teachers should be able to exert a powerful influence upon the stability and harmony of schools. Often they do not.

The relationship which teachers create with their students is critical. Teaching machines can be purchased; the teacher's contribution is to be a humane catalyst for students' intellectual and emotional growth.

Teachers can communicate with parents more than many of them do. A mother reported: "Thanksgiving week I went to school to see about Sally's reading problem. The teacher said, 'Well, Mrs. Brown, you know Sally is probably the hardest child to control that I have in this class!' I replied, 'What? What day is this? November 18. And you are just now telling me this? What's the matter that you didn't let me know about this problem

so that we could get to the bottom of it sooner instead of waiting till a quarter of the year has slipped by?" What kind of a teacher is this?"

Teachers can recognize that their job is more than to operate in the isolation of their respective classrooms. In addition, they have a responsibility for the welfare of the school-as-a-whole. They must recognize that they cannot leave to the principal and his assistants the responsibility for all student conduct outside the confines of classrooms. Through group efforts, the faculty should strive toward harmonious conditions in school just as it works to attain a higher salary schedule next year.

Teachers must recognize that the activities programs in schools are vitally important. Loyal students are the basis for a sound and purposeful school. The activities program is the means of winning the loyalties of many "have-not" students. To provide this is a professional responsibility which teachers must undertake in earnest.

And they must madly teach—madly, passionately, intensely. No lukewarm pedagogue can capture the interest and kindle the spirit of scholarship in today's students. The most important part of high schools is what happens in the classroom; it had better be good! A teacher who does a first-rate job with his classes must break free from predictable daily routine, guaranteeing an opportunity for real progression of learning from week to week and bridging the hiatus between textbook and reality so that there is no basis for complaints of irrelevance.

Problems related to race and the irrelevance of school have been noted; another matter to resolve is the conflict of youth versus authority. Adults in school should have the advantage of greater perspective, greater understanding of the social and psychological dynamics behind clashes over authority. Teachers who have sufficient personal security to act rationally and not "lose their cool" make a difference. Essentially, we need *whole persons* working in our schools.

PARENTS

Are parents part of the problem or part of the solution? That depends upon the parent. Assuming a desire to exert influence for

a socially sound high school rather than a fractious one, there are a number of things that a parent can do.

A parent can help by collaborating with the principal in fostering needed changes in school instead of becoming an opposition force. This is not to say that the parent should abdicate his judgment and values. Parents should express their opinions (after listening to the relevant facts) and exert their influence before decisions are made. But once a decision is made, a parent can work for school stability by showing support.

Three classic responses to unwelcome social change are to try to suppress it, to accommodate it, or to panic and flee. If a parent takes at face value the distorted tales of trouble, passes them on to others, and keeps his own children home from school, he thereby makes matters worse. In school after school, a one-minute fracas in the lunchroom in which a few empty milk cartons were thrown and one student was struck becomes a rumor throughout the community of a wild gang fight, chairs thrown, students knocked unconscious, and the principal hospitalized. The parent who takes such rumors at face value and hastily removes children, either temporarily or for transfer to an independent school, bears a prime responsibility for the decline of public education.

The parent who is uneasy about her daughter's safety in attending a troubled high school can satisfy her anxiety about conditions by volunteering to spend a half day periodically giving service as a parent lunchroom supervisor or as a teacher-aide serving elsewhere as the principal directs. There are some problem schools which need extra services beyond those which can be paid for through regular sources of school revenue. In many communities, school conditions have been improved greatly through the services of parent volunteer squads, organized so that the manpower in school was usefully supplemented, but so the burden on any one parent did not exceed four hours per week.

A parent concerned about the subject of race at school should heed the adage that "charity begins at home." If a mother or father realizes that the positive qualities of humanity are distributed evenly throughout mankind, without regard to skin color or salary level, he should communicate this truth to his children

in every way possible—both by precept and example. And he should encourage his children to have direct experiences with young people of other races and social classes by having them himself.

Every citizen has an opportunity to influence the economic support of schools. The best education occurs in communities that spend the most for schools. Money attracts superior teachers and superior administrative leadership. It also buys teaching materials and supplies necessary to adapt instruction to changing needs. The parent who would counter the forces which threaten America's high schools can press for adequate fiscal support for the particular needs of the schools in his community.

PRINCIPALS

Doctor Dan W. Dodson said in Chapter 10: "If I were betting on any of the potential solutions of the social problems of the high school, I would put my money on the principal."² This is reasonable, for the man in this position is, in many respects, the commanding officer of a high school. Because implementation of many of the suggestions presented throughout this book fall within his jurisdiction, only general observations will be made here about the principal's responsibilities in reducing high school conflict.

The best insurance against disruptive student activism is an activist principal. The problems and needs of a large, mixed, comprehensive high school are numerous. Few of them will be solved by time alone. The man responsible for leadership in the school must plan and initiate the needed changes, working closely with his staff associates, the faculty, and students.

The effective principal must be an activist, free to adopt new programs and procedures if they respond to a need, even though they may depart from tradition.

To identify the need for changes, to initiate them, to delegate the work of managing them, and to interpret new ideas requires that the principal be an expert communicator. The principal who is effective in stemming student unrest will recognize that the heart of the school is not in the office, but in the students and teachers; he must spend most of his time where they are—in

classrooms, cafeteria, corridors, and faculty rooms—listening attentively and speaking candidly. Where established channels of communication exist, he will use them. Where they are lacking, he will create them, both with respect to school and community.

Yet a charismatic and innovative principal has no guarantee of success. Three schools visited in this study had leaders with these qualities. But in two of the three, relations between principal and faculty were strained, the teachers failing to understand and support his tactics. This is serious, for despite any gains made in student harmony or in community relations, if there is a rift between principal and teachers, the school is in perilous condition. In order to avoid this, the principal must be honest with his colleagues. He must meet with them, explain problems as he sees them, and cooperatively develop answers. He must keep in continual touch with a representative faculty group as the school year unfolds.

BOARDS OF EDUCATION AND SUPERINTENDENTS

In a large school system the central authorities should identify the problem-prone schools and staff them accordingly. The principal of a large, mixed high school has a combination of administrative demands facing him which are more akin to the demands upon a big city mayor than the conventional work of educators. To free the principal for the important work of communications and “human engineering,” the board should provide adequate administrative and secretarial assistance.

It is not always realistic to insist upon “business as usual” academic work during each of the 180 school days. In many schools there is other pressing business that must be attended to. Human relations programs are needed for teachers and students. Communication days are needed so that school problems can be identified and solutions developed, lest they become festering institutional sores. In some fractious schools, removing the leaders of opposing factions for a retreat in which both superficial and basic differences are recognized and, to some degree, reconciled is valuable. All such programs require the endorsement and support of the board of education.

Incompetent and bigoted teachers can do grave harm in bring-

ing a school to the boiling point. Too often an angry student complains to the principal about some outrageous deed or statement of a teacher only to be told by the principal to whom this is an old story: "Yes, I know, but what can I do? She has tenure." Boards of education can write policies defining professional incompetence more comprehensively. They can empower principals to mandate retraining programs for teachers, they can transfer them, or, if circumstances warrant, they can recommend more serious action.

Every high school with a significant number of black students should have at least one black administrator—not for reasons of tokenism but to give hope to black students, to show that race does not constitute a ceiling for attainments, to perform a liaison function, to eliminate the complaint that "there is no one we can talk to," and to act as an advocate so that as issues are discussed around the principal's conference table there will be present someone who can interpret the view of black students.

Boards of education should hold conferences with secondary principals on student unrest at least twice a year. Faced with the prospect of turbulent conditions in the schools, superintendents, board members, and principals need to consider the situation together, to understand one another's insights, and to know what they can expect from one another. This should occur by design in times of tranquillity; it should not take a crisis to overcome the isolation of responsible people serving in these different echelons of school work.

Boards of education should support needed remedial or compensatory education for the academic "have nots." Skill in language is the currency of school work. The young person who has grown through his first eight or nine years of life without much attention from working parents is at a marked disadvantage from other students. The disadvantage is seen in the classroom and in reluctance to participate in dramatics, student government, and in countless other activities. School authorities should recognize this and provide the necessary compensatory education, costly though it be, so that minority children and the children of the poor can begin to close the gap of social separation and dual-standard education.

The school reforms which have been advocated in this book do not come from the realm of untried theory; some of them have been tried in one high school, some in another. There is no model high school where everything is right. Community discord may spill over into the school, so the possibility of conflict exists. In schools where intelligent and resourceful leadership has been applied, however, it is more likely that trouble arising from random sources may be promptly resolved, sometimes within one day. This is an altogether different and healthier matter than the recurrent conflict in many city high schools.

There are strong social forces at work in our nation. These must be recognized, for they are powerful enough to change the shape of many social institutions, including schools. The question is whether the change will occur as a chaotic phenomenon initiated by sundry individuals and groups, or whether the responsible leaders will recognize emerging needs and will preside over the reforms.

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APPENDIX I

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APPENDIX II

(List of Films for Human Relations)

- Boy* (12 min., b/w). Anti-Defamation League, 1964. Produced by Bob Sherwood. One of a series of three productions of Malcolm Boyd's trilogy of plays. Features a Negro shoeshine boy whose white customer speaks and behaves harshly. After the customer leaves, the Negro uses role-playing to pretend he is the white man and acts out how he would like to be treated, exposing the degradation to which he has been subjected by the white world.
- A Chairy Tale* (10 min., b/w). International Film Bureau, 1957. Produced by National Film Board of Canada. A chair becomes animated and refuses to accept a person who wants to sit in it. The film symbolically treats the question of one person trying to manipulate another. It shows that reconciliation is possible only when the person in the dominant position is willing to be flexible and positively identify with the other person.
- Felicia* (13 min., color). McGraw-Hill, 1965. Produced by Stuart Roe. Shows the life of a Negro girl in Watts, Los Angeles, California. Presents her observations about life in a segregated community, expressing some of the hopes and frustrations of the Negro population as a whole.
- New Mood* (30 min., b/w). Produced by National Educational Television, Inc. Reviews highlights of the Civil Rights struggle from 1954-64. Examines the impact of Negro militancy on Negro and white Americans. Includes film coverage of Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, Medgar Evers, and Presidents Kennedy and Johnson.
- No Hiding Place* (51 min., b/w). Carousel Films, 1963. Produced by Columbia Broadcasting System. The film exposes the evils of

"block-busting" perpetuated by unscrupulous real-estate dealers upon suburban home owners. Dramatically traces the events in a neighborhood into which a Negro family has just moved. Reveals how block-busting tactics create panic and tension, frequently causing the collapse of an entire community.

No Hiding Place: Minority Life in the Suburbs (58 min., b/w). Produced by National Educational Television. A documentary that probes the racial tensions in a suburban town. Through interviews, residents reveal that the problems of the black community have no effect on the majority of whites. But a minority of black and white residents who "dare to trust each other" seek to establish meaningful communication.

Nothing But A Man (92 min., b/w). Brandon Films, 1966. Produced by Michael Roemer and Robert Young. A Negro railway worker falls in love with a girl, marries, and starts to assume a more mature adult role. His white co-workers keep putting him down and insisting that he act like a "nigger." He refuses to do this and the marriage is in jeopardy. At one stage in the story, the hero takes a trip to see his father and some traumatic things about the lack of personal and family identity of Negroes are revealed.

One Potato, Two Potato (92 min., b/w). Trans-World Films, Inc., 1965. Produced by Cinema V. A white woman whose first husband has deserted her and their little girl meets a Negro man through her work. They eventually fall in love and marry. The father of the girl returns and starts legal proceedings to obtain custody of his daughter. Although his minister tries to discourage him and, despite the fact he has no wife or promise of a permanent home, he continues his suit. The white judge, after much pondering, awards custody of the girl to the father. This film ends with a scene at the couple's home depicting the child's bewilderment and grief as the father arrives and takes her away.

A Patch of Blue (105 min., b/w). Films Incorporated, 1965. Produced by MGM. A touching film about the liberation of a poor, white, blind girl by a Negro reporter. Selina finds, in her Negro lover, ways to a whole new world through learning Braille. The girl comes to understand that loving a person has nothing to do with race, color,

or religion. There is a great deal of social criticism and the film ends leaving many serious questions open.

The Quiet One (68 Min., b/w). Contemporary Films, 1948. Produced by Film Document Inc. The film deals with a mentally disturbed Negro child who comes from a disrupted Harlem home. He is sent to a boys' correctional school for delinquents where he receives the counseling and training needed for rehabilitation.

A Time for Burning (58 min., color). Contemporary Films, 1966. Produced by Lutheran Film Association. This film documentary explores the resistance to interracial understanding based on the experiences of a minister of an all-white church who suggests exchange visits with a nearby Negro congregation.

Walk in My Shoes (Parts 1 and 2, 54 min., b/w). McGraw-Hill, 1963. An ABC Presentation. This film forcefully explores the world of the Negro American and listens to him as he speaks in his many voices. He speaks for and against the Black Muslims, Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., Freedom Riders, more rapid integration, and the NAACP. Although he may make great strides, he is never completely accepted in the mainstream of American life.

Who Do You Kill? (51 min., b/w). Carousel Films, 1964. Produced by CBS-TV. Part of the East Side-West Side TV show, this is the story of a young Negro couple living in a dirty rat-infested Harlem tenement. They face anti-Negro job prejudice, frustration, and bitterness.

The World, the Flesh, and the Devil (96 min., b/w). Films Inc., 1959. Produced by MGM. In this film, set in New York City, a lonely, unhappy black man meets a white girl. Their relationship slowly grows and deepens until a white man appears and a triangle competition develops. The film gets at the point that prejudice and racism are very deeply rooted in the American psyche.

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